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THE
LIFE AND DISCOURSES
OF
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,
FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

First American Edition.

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LIFE
OF
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

JOSHUA, the son of the Reverend Samuel Reynolds, and Theophila Potter, his wife, was the tenth of eleven children, five of whom died in infancy. He was born at Plympton, in Devonshire, on Thursday, July 16th, 1723, three months before the death of Sir Godfrey Kneller; "thus perpetuating," say some of his biographers, "the hereditary descent of art." This descent of talent had a better security for continuation than the life of a new-born child. Wilson was ten years old, and Hogarth had already distinguished himself. The admirers and disciples of Sir Joshua imagined that the mantle of art remained suspended in the air, from the day of Kneller's ascent, and refrained from descending upon other shoulders till their favorite rose to manhood and eminence. The pride of Reynolds would have resented in life this compliment from his friends—he who shared in imagination the imperial robe of Michael Angelo, would have scorned the meaner mantle of Godfrey Kneller.

Few men of genius are allowed to be born or baptized in an ordinary way; some commotion in nature must mark the hour of their birth, some strange interposition must determine their name—the like happened to young Reynolds. His father, a clergyman of the established church, gave him the scriptural name of Joshua, in the belief, says Malone, who had the legend from Bishop Percy of Dromore, that some enthusiast of the same name might be

induced to give him a fortune. The family motives, as recorded by Northcote, had more of the shrewdness of calculation in them. An uncle, from whom something might be expected, lived in the neighborhood, and *he* was a Joshua. Owing to the haste or carelessness of the clergyman, the church may claim some share in the marvels which accompanied his birth; he was baptized in one name, and entered in the parish register in another—the Joshua of all the rest of the world is a Joseph at Plympton.

The Reverend Samuel Reynolds, a pious and indolent man, who performed, without reproach, his stated duties in religion, and presided with the reputation of a scholar in the public school of Plympton, seems to have neglected, more than such a parent ought, the education of his son. It is true that the boy, inspired (as Johnson intimates in his *Life of Cowley*) with Richardson's *Treatise on Painting*, appeared, like Hogarth before him, to be more inclined to make private drawings than public exercises; and it is likewise true that his father rebuked those delinquencies, on one occasion at least, by writing on the back of a prohibited drawing, "Done by Joshua out of pure idleness." But transient rebuke will not atone for habitual inattention—the education which we miss in youth we rarely obtain in age, and a good divine and a learned parent could not but know how much learning adorns the highest and brightens the humblest occupation. Northcote, the pupil, and lately the biographer of Reynolds, reluctantly admits his master's deficiency in classical attainments. But his incessant study of nature and practice in art—his intercourse with the world at large, and familiarity with men of learning and ability, accomplished in after life much of what his father had neglected in youth. "The mass of general knowledge by which he was distinguished," says Northcote, "was the result of much studious application in his riper years." "I know no man," observed Johnson to Boswell, "who has passed through life with more observation than Sir Joshua Reynolds."

His father, however, conceived that he had acquired learning sufficient for the practice of physic—for to that profession he was originally destined. He observed to Northcote that if such had been his career in life, he should have felt the same determination

to become the most eminent physician, as he then felt to be the first painter of his age and country. He believed, in short, that genius is but another name for extensive capacity, and that incessant and well-directed labor is the inspiration which creates all works of taste and talent.

His inclination to idleness as to reading, and industry in drawing, began to appear early. "His first essays," says Malone, who had the information from himself, "was copying some slight drawings made by two of his sisters who had a turn for art; he afterward eagerly copied such prints as he met with among his father's books; particularly those which were given in the translation of Plutarch's Lives, published by Dryden. But his principal fund of imitation was Jacob Catt's Book of Emblems, which his great-grandmother, by the father's side, a Dutch woman, had brought with her from Holland." The prints in Plutarch are rude and uncouth; those in the Book of Emblems are more to the purpose, and probably impressed upon him, by the comparison, that admiration of foreign art, which grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength.

When he was some eight years old, he read "The Jesuit's Perspective" with so much care and profit, that he made a drawing of Plympton school, a plain Gothic building, raised partly on pillars, in which the principles of that art were very tolerably adhered to. His father, a simple man and easily astonished, exclaimed, when he saw this drawing, "This is what the author of the Perspective asserts in his preface, that by observing the rules laid down in this book, a man may do wonders—for this is wonderful." Had the old man lived to see the great works of his son, in what words would he have expressed his admiration?

The approbation of his father, with his own natural love of art, induced him more and more to devote his time to drawing, and neglect his studies at school. He drew likenesses of his sisters and of various friends of the family; his proficiency increased with practice; and his ardor kept pace with his growing skill. Richardson's Treatise on Painting was now put into his hands, "The perusal of which," says Malone, "so delighted and inflamed his mind, that Raphael appeared to

him superior to the most illustrious names of ancient or modern times; a notion which he loved to indulge all the rest of his life."

With no other guides but such prints as he could collect, and little support but his own enthusiasm, Reynolds made many drawings and many portraits, in which his friends, who now began to be attracted by his progress, perceived an increasing accuracy of outline, and a growing boldness and freedom. Of those boyish productions no specimen, I believe, is preserved; he himself probably destroyed them, being little pleased with what he had done; but it is inconceivable that a youth like this, who gave so little of his leisure to other knowledge, should have executed nothing worthy of remembrance at the age of nineteen. There is no doubt that, as soon as he had a fair field for the display of his talents, he showed a mind stored with ready images of beauty, and a hand capable of portraying them with truth and effect.

A provincial place like Plympton was too contracted for his expanding powers, and a friend and neighbor, of the name of Cranch, advised that Joshua should be sent to study and improve himself in London. To London he was accordingly sent on the fourteenth of October, 1741, and on the eighteenth of the same month, the day of St. Luke, the patron saint of painters, he was placed under the care of Mr. Hudson. Of this propitious circumstance, his biographers take particular notice; it keeps the chain of remarkable circumstances unbroken. This favorite of the fates was born three months before the death of Kneller; was named Joshua in a kind of speculation upon Providence; and commenced his studies in London on the day of Saint Luke. Fortune having done her best, young Reynolds had nothing more to do but stand in the way and be pushed silently on to wealth and reputation.

Hudson, the most distinguished portrait-maker of that time, was nevertheless a man of little skill and less talent, who could paint a head, but without other aid was unable to place it upon the shoulders. He was in truth a mere manufacturer of portraits; and as the taste and practice of Reynolds lay in the same line, there was some propriety in the choice. The timely counsel of

his neighbor Cranch would have long afterward been rewarded with the present of a silver cup, had not an accident interfered. "Death," says Northcote, "prevented this act of gratitude—I have seen the cup at Sir Joshua's table." The painter had the honor of the intention and the use of the cup—a twofold advantage, of which he was not insensible.

At this time Hogarth was in the full enjoyment of his fame. His works were the wonder of every one, and an example to none. His peculiar excellence, indeed, was of such an order that rivalry there was hopeless; and no artist had the sagacity to see, that by adopting a style more sober and less sarcastic, with a greater infusion of beauty, a name as great or greater than his might have been achieved. Students consumed their time in drawing incessantly from other men's works, and vainly thought, by gazing constantly on the unattainable excellence of Raphael and Correggio, to catch a portion of their inspiration. When any one departed from such tame and servile rules, he was pronounced a Gothic dreamer, and unworthy of being numbered among those happy persons patronised by Saint Luke. This accounts for the name of Hogarth being rarely or never found in the lectures or letters of the artists of his own time. Men who are regularly trained to the admiration of a certain class of works, admit few into the ranks of painting who have not a kind of academic certificate, and lop carefully away all wild or overflourishing branches from the tree of regular art. Among persons of this stamp, to admire Hogarth amounts to treason against the great masters. The painters of those days were worshippers of the "grand style"—a term which would seem to mean something alone and unapproachable, for no man offered to make any approaches to it by works that partook of either dignity or imagination.

Reynolds proceeded with his studies under Hudson; but it seldom happens that a man of no genius and moderate skill can give sound counsel to one who longs for distinction, and has the talent to obtain it. Instead of studying from the best models, he caused his pupil to squander time in making careful copies from the drawings of Guercino. These he executed with so much skill, that it was difficult to distinguish them from the originals; and

some of them are, at this present moment, shown in the cabinets of the curious as the masterly drawings of Guercino.

While he remained with Hudson he went to a sale of pictures, and just before the auctioneer commenced, he observed a great bustle at the door, and heard "Pope! Pope!" whispered round the room. All drew back to make way for the poet to pass, and those who were near enough held out their hands for him to touch as he went along. Reynolds held out his, and had the honor of a gentle shake, of which he was ever after proud. This was one of the early anecdotes of his life which he loved to relate; it shows the enthusiasm of the young painter, and the popularity of the great poet.

He continued for two years in the employment of Hudson, and acquired with uncommon rapidity such professional knowledge as could then and there be obtained. He painted during that period various portraits, of which he never gave any account, and made many sketches and studies which would require a minute description to be comprehended. It is enough to say, that in general they contained the germ of some of his future graces, and displayed considerable freedom of handling and truth of delineation. Among the productions most worthy of remembrance, was the portrait of an elderly servant-woman of Hudson's, in which, says Northcote, he discovered a taste so superior to the painters of the day, that his master, not without displaying a strong feeling of jealousy, foretold his future eminence. It was accidentally exhibited in Hudson's gallery, and obtained general applause. This was more than the old man could endure. Without any warm or angry words, a separation took place, and Reynolds returned into Devonshire.

Had his talents been known, and had his works at that period been publicly exhibited, Reynolds would have remained in London; for patronage is ever ready to encourage skill such as his, exerted in such a department. He returned home, however, in 1743, and passed three years in company, from which, as he informed Malone, little improvement could be got. Of this misemployment of his time he always spoke with concern. He had, however, the good sense to consider his disagreement with Hudson as a bless-

ing; otherwise, he confessed, it might have been very difficult for him to escape from the tameness and insipidity, from the fair tied wigs, blue velvet coats, and white satin waistcoats, which his master bestowed liberally on all customers. Of the use of the three years in question, Reynolds was certainly a competent judge; yet weight must be allowed to the opinion of Northcote, who says, that during this period he produced many portraits, particularly one of a boy reading by a reflected light, which were undoubtedly very fine. And in truth, Sir Joshua himself seems to have acknowledged this, when, on seeing some of these pieces at the distance of thirty years, he lamented that in so great a length of time, he had made so little progress in his art.

It was indeed impossible for a mind so active, and a hand so ready, to continue idle; and there can be no doubt that Reynolds was silently improving himself, even though he was not satisfied with the progress. There were few paintings of excellence indeed near him, but it is not on admirable paintings alone that a painter should look; there were beauty and manliness enough in Devonshire for the purposes of his profession, and when he was weary of that, there were the images which he had stored away in his memory, and which his fancy could recall whenever it was desirable. It is more satisfactory to some of his professional friends to think that he studied with profit, the works of William Gandy, of Exeter—a painter, some of whose portraits Reynolds certainly spoke of as equal to those of Rembrandt. One of Gandy's works he particularly admired, the portrait of an alderman of Exeter, placed in one of the public buildings of that place; and one of his observations he took much pleasure in repeating, namely, that a picture should have a richness in its texture as if the colors had been composed of cream or cheese.

When he was two-and-twenty years old, Reynolds and his two youngest unmarried sisters took a house at the town of Plymouth Dock. Here he occupied the first floor, and employed his time in painting portraits. It must be confessed that many of his productions, up to this period, were carelessly drawn—in common attitudes, and undistinguished by those excellences of coloring and power of expression, which have made his name famous. His

old master, Hudson, was still strong within him. One hand was hid in the unbuttoned waistcoat; the other held the hat, and the face was looking forwards with that vacant listlessness which is the mark of a sitter who conceives portrait-painting to resemble shaving, and that the *sine qua non* is to keep his features stiff and composed. One gentleman desired to be distinguished from others, and was painted with his hat on his head; yet so inveterate had the practice of painting in one position become, that—if there be any truth in a story as yet uncontradicted—when the likeness was sent home, the wife of the patient discovered that her husband had not only one hat on his head but another under his arm. It is, however, well known that, even when his reputation was high, Reynolds permitted ladies, and gentlemen, too, to select for themselves the positions they wished to be painted in; and his Devonshire patrons of this early period might in all likelihood consider it as desirable to appear, as much as possible, like their fathers and their friends. When left to the freedom of his own will, some of his attitudes, even in these days, were bold enough. A portrait of himself, which represents him with pencils and palette in his left hand, and shading the light from his eyes with his right, was painted at this time, and is, without doubt, a work of great merit.

Miss Chudleigh, a young lady of rare beauty, afterward too famous as Duchess of Kingston, happened to be on a visit at Saltram in the neighborhood of Plymouth, and sat for her portrait. This seems to have pleased Reynolds less than another sitter, whom he obtained at the same time, for he could not foresee that she would become a duchess. This was the commissioner of Plymouth Dock; he wrote to his father with a joy which he sought not to conceal, that he had painted the likeness of the greatest man in the place. The performance which obtained him most notice was the portrait of Captain Hamilton, of the noble family of Abercorn. It was painted in 1746.

On Christmas day, in the year 1746, his father died. He was a man of respectable learning, and remarkable for the innocence of his heart and the simplicity of his manners. He was what is called an absent man, and was regarded by his parishioners as a

sort of Parson Adams. Of his forgetfulness it is said that, in performing a journey on horseback, one of his boots dropped off by the way without being missed by the owner; and of his wit—for wit also has been ascribed to him—it is related that, in allusion to his wife's name, *Theophila*, he made the following rhyming domestic arrangement:

When I say The
Thou must make tea—
When I say Offey
Thou must make coffee.

Reynolds was now twenty-three years old, and his name was beginning to be heard beyond the limits of his native county. He had acquired the friendship and earnest patronage of the third Lord Edgcombe, and of Captain, afterward Lord, Keppel. He had paid a second visit to London, and lived for a time in Saint Martin's Lane, then the favorite residence of artists, and where something which resembled an academy was established. His growing fame and skill acquired and secured friends, and his graceful and unassuming manners were likely to forward his success; he was polite without meanness, and independent without arrogance.

Rome, which is in reality to painters what Parnassus is in imagination to poets, was frequently present to the fancy of Reynolds; and he longed to see with his own eyes the glories in art of which he heard so much. He desired to pay his homage to the princes of the profession, and profit, if possible, by studying their productions. A visit to the Sistine Chapel confers on an artist that kind of dignity, which studying at a university bestows on a scholar; and one would imagine, from the importance attached to such a pilgrimage, that excellence in painting could be acquired like knowledge in Greek. But the power to remember is one thing, and the power to create is another.

In the month of May, 1749, Captain Keppel was appointed Commodore in the Mediterranean station, for the purpose of protecting the British merchants from the insults of the Algerines, and he invited Reynolds to accompany him. The young artist willingly embarked with the full equipment of his profession, and

touching at Lisbon, went ashore, and witnessed several religious processions. He next visited Gibraltar; and on the 20th of July landed at Algiers, where he was introduced to the Dey, who behaved with civility, and dismissed Keppel and his companion with assurances of amity and good will, which he afterward seemed disinclined to keep. From Algiers they sailed for Minorca, and landed at Port Mahon on the 28d of August. The friendship of Keppel and the kindness of General Blakeney were here very serviceable; through their influence and his own skill, Reynolds was employed to paint portraits of almost all the officers in the garrison; and as he lived free of all expense at the governor's table, he improved his fortune at the same time that he exercised his talents.

Reynolds was detained in Minorca longer than he wished. As he was taking an airing on horseback, his horse took fright, and rushed with him down a precipice, by which his face was severely cut, and his lip so much bruised that he was compelled to have some of it cut away. A slight deformity marked his mouth ever after. His deafness was imputed by some to the same misfortune; but that misfortune dated from a dangerous illness in Rome. After a residence of three months, he left Port Mahon, landed at Leghorn, and went directly to Rome.

Of his first sensations in the Metropolis of Art, he has left us a minute account. "It has frequently happened," says he, "as I was informed by the keeper of the Vatican, that many of those whom he had conducted through the various apartments of that edifice, when about to be dismissed, have asked for the works of Raphael, and would not believe that they had already passed through the rooms where they are preserved; so little impression had those performances made on them. One of the first painters in France once told me that this circumstance happened to himself; though he now looks on Raphael with that veneration which he deserves from all painters and lovers of the art. I remember very well my own disappointment when I first visited the Vatican; but on confessing my feelings to a brother student, of whose ingenuousness I had a high opinion, he acknowledged that the works of Raphael had the same effect on him, or rather that they did

not produce the effect which he expected. This was a great relief to my mind ; and on inquiring farther of other students, I found that those persons only who, from natural imbecility, appeared to be incapable of relishing those divine performances, made pretensions to instantaneous raptures on first beholding them. In justice to myself, however, I must add, that though disappointed and mortified at not finding myself enraptured with the works of this great master, I did not for a moment conceive or suppose that the name of Raphael, and those admirable paintings in particular, owed their reputation to the ignorance and prejudice of mankind ; on the contrary, my not relishing them, as I was conscious I ought to have done, was one of the most humiliating circumstances that ever happened to me ; I found myself in the midst of works executed upon principles with which I was unacquainted ; I felt my ignorance, and stood abashed. All the indigested notions of painting which I had brought with me from England, where the art was in the lowest state it had ever been in, (it could not indeed be lower,) were to be totally done away and eradicated from my mind. It was necessary, as it is expressed on a very solemn occasion, that I should become *as a little child*. Notwithstanding my disappointment, I proceeded to copy some of those excellent works. I viewed them again and again ; I even affected to feel their merit and admire them more than I really did. In a short time a new taste and a new perception began to dawn upon me, and I was convinced that I had originally formed a false opinion of the perfection of art, and that this great painter was well entitled to the high rank which he holds in the admiration of the world. The truth is, that if these works had really been what I expected, they would have contained beauties superficial and alluring, but by no means such as would have entitled them to the great reputation which they have borne so long, and so justly obtained."

That Reynolds had imagined the Vatican filled with works of another order from what he found there, is only informing us that in his earlier years he thought differently from Raphael. He had been accustomed to admire stiff or extravagant attitudes, and to put faith in works deficient in the sober dignity and majestic simplicity which distinguished the illustrious Italian. He saw those

noble productions ; and though at first he could not feel their excellence, he, before he left Rome, became one of their daily worshippers. All this was very natural ; but the conclusion which Reynolds draws, viz. that none but an imbecile person can be alive at first sight to the genius of a Raphael, is certainly rash, and, most probably, erroneous.

“ Having,” he says, “ since that period frequently revolved the subject in my mind, I am now clearly of opinion that a relish for the higher excellences of art is an acquired taste, which no man ever possessed without long cultivation and great labor and attention. On such occasions as that which I have mentioned, we are often ashamed of our apparent dulness ; as if it were to be expected that our minds, like tinder, should catch fire from the divine spark of Raphael’s genius. I flatter myself that now it would be so, and that I have a just and lively perception of his great powers ; but let it be always remembered, that the excellence of his style is not on the surface, but lies deep ; and at the first view is seen but mistily. It is the florid style which strikes at once, and captivates the eye for a time, without ever satisfying the judgment. Nor does painting in this respect differ from other arts. A just poetical taste, and the acquisition of a nice discriminative musical ear, are equally the work of time. Even the eye, however perfect in itself, is often unable to distinguish between the brilliancy of two diamonds ; though the experienced jeweler will be amazed at its blindness ; not considering that there was a time when he himself could not have been able to pronounce which of the two was the more perfect.”

I must repeat that I doubt as to all this. True art is nature exalted and refined ; but it is nature still. We look on a noble scene—on a high mountain—on a mighty sea—on a troubled sky—or on any of the splendid pictures which the Lord of the universe spreads before his creatures, and we require no long course of study, no series of academic lectures on light and shade, to enable us to feel their grandeur or their beauty. If the study of many years, and great labor and attention, be absolutely necessary to enable men to comprehend and relish the nobler productions of the poet and the painter—then who has not judged by guess

and admired by random some of the most glorious works of the human mind? That it cost Reynolds much time and study to understand and admire them, is nothing. He had to banish preconceived false notions; to dismiss idolized and merely conventional beauties, and strip himself of labored absurdities, with which he had been bedecking himself from his infancy. He had to rise out of false art into true nature—and this was not to be done in a day. But is it necessary that all men should start with a false theory? The acquisition of a natural taste in poetry, or a correct musical apprehension, may be the work of time with some, but they are as certainly a kind of inspiration in others. Reynolds himself seems to have thought with more accuracy when he wrote as follows:

“The man of true genius,” says he, “instead of spending all his hours, as many artists do while they are at Rome, in measuring statues and copying pictures, soon begins to think for himself, and endeavors to do something like what he sees. I consider general copying a delusive kind of industry; the student satisfies himself with the appearance of doing something; he falls into the dangerous habit of imitating without selecting, and of laboring without any determinate object; as it requires no effort of the mind, he sleeps over his work, and those powers of invention and disposition, which ought particularly to be called out and put in action, lie torpid, and lose their energy for want of exercise. How incapable of producing any thing of their own those are who have spent most of their time in making finished copies, is an observation well known to all who are conversant with our art.”

To Reynold's own written account I may add the testimony of a friend, who often conversed with him upon the glories of Rome: “When arrived in that garden of the world”—says Northcote—“that great temple of the arts, his time was diligently and judiciously employed in such a manner as might have been expected from one of his talents and virtue. He contemplated with unwearied attention and ardent zeal the various beauties which marked the style of different schools and different ages. It was with no common eye that he beheld the productions of the great masters. He copied and sketched in the Vatican such parts of the works of

Raphael and Michael Angelo as he thought would be most conducive to his future excellence, and by his well directed study acquired, while he contemplated the best works of the best masters, that grace of thinking, to which he was principally indebted for his subsequent reputation as a portrait painter."

Much, however, as Reynolds in his lectures inculcates the necessity of constantly copying the great masters—it appears that he did but little in this way himself. "Of the few copies which he made while at Rome," says Malone, "two are now in the possession of the Earl of Inchquin, who married his niece, Miss Palmer, St. Michael the Archangel slaying the dragon, after Guido, and the school of Athens from Raphael—both masterly performances." Rome at that period swarmed with those English connoisseurs and travelers of taste whom Hogarth so sharply satirized and hated so cordially. They were all anxious to have copies of favorite works made by an artist so able as Reynolds; he felt, however, the folly of multiplying pictures, and eluded their alluring offers. "While I was at Rome," he says, "I was very little employed by travelers, and that little I always considered as so much time lost."

Of the character and course of his technical studies in Rome, he has left a minute account; which, however, is chiefly valuable to the student in painting—for the language is that of the craft. Having filled his mind with the character of the great painters, and possessed himself, as he believed, with no small portion of their spirit, he proceeded to examine into the mechanical sorcery of their execution, and to dissect the varied colors which were blended on their canvass. "The Leda in the Colonna Palace, by Correggio," he says, "is dead-colored white, and black or ultramarine in the shadows; and over that is scumbled thinly and smooth a warmer tint—I believe *caput mortuum*. The lights are mellow, the shadows bluish, but mellow. The picture is painted on a panel in a broad, large manner, but finished like an enamel; the shadows harmonize, and are lost in the ground.

"The Adonis of Titian in the Colonna Palace is dead-colored white, with the muscles marked bold; the second painting has scumbled a light color over it; the lights a mellow flesh-color; the

shadows in the light parts of a faint purple hue; at least they were so at first. That purple hue seems to be occasioned by blackish shadows under, and the color scumbled over them. I copied the Titian with white, umber, minio, cinnabar, black; the shadows thin of color.

"Poussin's landscapes in the Verospi palace are painted on a dark ground made of Indian red and black. The same ground might do for all other subjects as well as landscapes.

"In respect to painting the flesh tint, after it has been finished with very strong colors, such as ultra-marine and carmine, pass white over it very, very thin with oil. I believe it will have a wonderful effect. Make a finished sketch of every portrait you intend to paint, and by the help of that dispose your living model; then finish at the first time on a ground made of Indian red and black."

Through all his letters and memorandums there are scattered allusions to his favorite art, and the works of the chief masters; and opinions are given, and a scale of comparative excellence laid down, in a manner equally clear, candid, and accurate. It is true that he dictates rules for the guidance of others which he did not follow himself. When he became acquainted with all the wiles and stratagems of position and light and shade, he could dispense with the practice of making sketches of portraits, and depend on his experience.

"In comparison with Titian and Paul Veronese," he observes, "all the other Venetian masters appear hard; they have in a degree the manner of Rembrandt—all mezzotinto, occasioned by scumbling over their pictures with some dark oil or color. There is little color in the shadows, but much oil—they seem to be made only of a drying oil composed of red lead and oil. There are some artists who are diligent in examining pictures, and yet are not at all advanced in their judgment; although they can remember the exact color of every figure in the picture; but not reflecting deeply on what they have seen, or making observations to themselves, they are not at all improved by the crowd of particulars that swim on the surface of their brains; as nothing enters deep enough into their minds to do them benefit through

digestion. A painter should form his rules from pictures rather than from books or precepts. Rules were first made from pictures, not pictures from rules. Every picture an artist sees, whether the most excellent or the most ordinary, he should consider from whence that fine effect, or that ill effect, proceeds; and then there is no picture ever so indifferent, but he may look at to his profit."

On our English connoisseurs and travelers of taste, he has written some sharp and just remarks. This country, at that period, and long after, exported swarms of men with the malady of vertu upon them, who brought back long lists of pictures, and catalogues of artists' names—and set up for dictators here at home with no other stock. "The manner," says Reynolds, "of the English' travelers in general, and of those who most pique themselves on studying vertu, is that, instead of examining the beauties of these works of fame, and why they are esteemed, they only inquire the subject of the picture and the name of the painter, the history of a statue, and where it is found, and write that down. Some Englishmen, while I was in the Vatican, came there, and spent above six hours in writing down whatever the antiquary dictated to them. They scarcely ever looked at the paintings the whole time."

Reynolds extended his inquiries among the remains of ancient art, and endeavored to ascertain, by what he could glean from the classic writers, and by what he could discover in the remaining statues, how far the paintings of ancient Greece resembled those of modern Rome. His conclusions can only be considered as expressions of belief, on a subject with regard to which we have not the materials of certain knowledge. He stayed in Rome till his judgment ripened, and gazed on the productions of Raphael and Michael Angelo till the mercury of his taste rose to the point of admiration. He then concluded, that as those works were the most perfect in the world, the paintings of antiquity *must* have been in character the same—in short, that the "grand style" had descended direct from Apelles to Raphael. From an anecdote in Pliny of the painter and the partridge, he conceived that a lively copy of nature was held as a vulgar thing by the painters of Greece, and that they approached living life no nearer than the

sculptor of the Belvedere Apollo. This theory, however, appears to be contradicted by the Elgin marbles, and by the poetry of the nation, which is full of graphic images of homely, as well as heroic, life. These conclusions, and his constant admonition to study the "grand style," and think of nothing but what is heroic or godlike as a subject for the pencil, have helped to misdirect the minds of students, and beget a monotony of composition, through which nothing but strong and decided genius can break. Few men are born with powers equal to the divine grandeur of such works—and many a good painter of domestic life may attribute the laborious dulness of his historic compositions to the incessant cry of all academies about the study of the "grand style." Hear how Reynolds commends the absence of nature :

"Suppose a person while he is contemplating a capital picture by Raphael or the Carracci, while he is wrapped in wonder at the sight of St. Paul preaching at Athens, and the various dispositions of his audience—or is struck with the distress of the mother in the Death of the Innocents—or with tears in his eyes beholds the Dead Christ of Carracci—would it not offend him to have his attention called off to observe a piece of drapery in the picture naturally represented?"

What is it that drapery ought to resemble—and wherewithal shall a man be clothed, that his garments may not look too natural? The living St. Paul himself was under no such apprehension; nor is it recorded that he failed in any of his missions because the heathen paid more attention to his clothes than his eloquence. The sentiment and character of the figure will dictate the drapery, and when these are strong, and true, and natural, they will always predominate over the accessaries. Had he advised to clothe a figure gayly or gravely according to the style of the countenance and gesture, Reynolds would have spoken more in keeping with his own practice.

He seems to have employed his time at Rome chiefly in studying all the varieties of excellence, and in acquiring that knowledge of effect which he was so soon to display. The severe dignity of Angelo or Raphael he had no chance of attaining, for he wanted loftiness of imagination, without which no grand work can

ever be achieved; but he had a deep sense of character, great skill in light and shade, a graceful softness and an alluring sweetness, such as none have surpassed. From the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Fra. Bartolomeo, Titian, and Velasquez, he acquired knowledge which placed fortune and fame within his reach; yet of these artists he says little, though he acknowledges the portrait of Innocent the Tenth, by the last named of them, to be the finest in the world.

Few original productions came from the hand of Reynolds while he remained at Rome. He painted a noble portrait of himself, and left it in that city; and he also painted a kind of parody on Raphael's School of Athens, into which he introduced about thirty likenesses of English students, travelers, and connoisseurs, and among others that of Mr. Henry, of Straffan, in Ireland, the proprietor of the picture. "I have heard Reynolds himself say," remarks Northcote, "that it was universally allowed that he executed subjects of this kind with much humor and spirit, yet he thought it prudent to abandon the practice, since it might corrupt his taste as a portrait painter, whose duty it was to discover only the perfections of those whom he represented."

During the period of his studies at Rome, Reynolds was the companion of John Astley, who had been his fellow pupil in the school of Hudson. This was an indifferent artist and an imperfect scholar—for he would rather run three miles to deliver a message by word of mouth than write the shortest note—but his person attracted the notice of a lady of noble birth, who, moreover, brought him a very handsome fortune. Before his marriage he was poor and nearly destitute; yet he had a proud heart and strove to conceal his embarrassments. One summer day, when the sun was hot, and he, Reynolds, and a few others were indulging themselves in a country excursion, there was a general call to cast off coats—Astley obeyed with manifest reluctance, and not until he had stood many sarcasms from his friends. He had made the back of his waistcoat out of one of his own landscapes, and when he stripped, he displayed a foaming waterfall, much to his own confusion, and the mirth of his companions.

From Rome, Reynolds went to Bologna and Genoa. He was

not one of those artists who see—or think they see—through all the deep mysteries of conception and execution at a glance; he perused and reperused, and considered and compared with the assiduity and anxiety of a man ambitious to be counted with the foremost, and resolved not to fail for want of labor. He was more frugal of his remarks while at these cities than when he was at Rome; nor are the few which he did set down of any value, either to students or travelers. From Genoa he went to Parma, and this is his memorandum respecting the painting in the cupola of the cathedral:

“Relieve the light part of the picture with a dark ground, or the dark part with a light ground, which ever will have the most agreeable effect or make the best mass. The cupola of Parma has the dark objects relieved, and the lights scarcely distinguishable from the ground. Some whole figures are considered as shadows; all the lights are of one color. It is in the shadows only that the colors vary. In general, all the shadows should be of one color, and the lights only to be distinguished by different tints; at least it should be so when the back ground is dark in the picture.”

From Parma Reynolds went to Florence, where he remained two months, observing much, but committing few remarks to writing; and from thence he proceeded to Venice, where his stay was still shorter. This is the more remarkable, since the Venetian school influenced his professional character far more powerfully than all the other schools of art put together; and his silence concerning the excellences of the famous masters of Venice, and his short abode there, have occasioned some curious speculations. It has been observed that Reynolds admired one style and painted another; that with Raphael and Michael Angelo, and “the great masters” and “the grand style” on his lips, he dedicated his own pencil to works of a character into which little of the lofty, and nothing of the divine, could well be introduced. To have explained by what means and by what studies he acquired his own unrivalled skill in art, would have been more to the purpose than comments upon Correggio, or Raphael, or Michael Angelo. He has chosen to remain silent, and artists must seek for the knowl-

edge which made the fortune of Reynolds elsewhere than in his counsel.

"After an absence," says Malone, "of near three years, he began to think of returning home; and a slight circumstance, which he used to mention, may serve to show that, however great may have been the delight which he derived from residence in a country that Raphael and Michael Angelo had embellished by their works, the prospect of revisiting his native land was not unpleasing. When he was at Venice, in compliment to the English gentlemen then residing there, the manager of the Opera one night ordered the band to play an English ballad tune. Happening to be the popular air which was played or sung in almost every stand just at the time of their leaving London, by suggesting to them that metropolis with all its endearing circumstances, it immediately brought tears into Reynold's eyes, as well as into those of his countrymen who were present." "Thus nature will prevail," adds Northcote, "and Paul Veronese, Tintoret, and even Titian, were all given up at the moment, from the delightful prospect of again returning to his native land." On his way over Mount Cenis, he met Hudson and Roubiliac hasting on to Rome. At Paris, he found Chambers, the architect, who afterward aided him in founding the Royal Academy. Here he painted the portrait of Mrs. Chambers, who was eminently beautiful. She is represented in a hat, which shades part of her face. The picture was much admired, and must have raised high expectations.

He arrived in England in October, 1762, and after visiting Devonshire for a few weeks, obeyed the solicitations of Lord Edgumbe and his own wishes, and established himself as a professional man in St. Martin's Lane, London. He found such opposition as genius is commonly doomed to meet with, and does not always overcome. The boldness of his attempts, the freedom of his conceptions, and the brilliancy of his coloring, were considered as innovations upon the established and orthodox system of portrait manufacture. The artists raised their voices first; and of these Hudson, who had just returned from Rome, was loudest. His old master looked for some minutes on a boy in a turban, which he had just painted, and exclaimed, with the addi-

tion of the national oath—"Reynolds, you don't paint so well as when you left England!" Ellis, an eminent portrait painter, who had studied under Kneller, lifted up his voice the next—"Ah! Reynolds, this will never answer. Why, you don't paint in the least like Sir Godfrey." The youthful artist defended himself with much ability, upon which the other exclaimed in astonishment at this new heresy in art—"Shakspeare in poetry—and Kneller in painting, damme!"—and walked out of the room. This sharp treatment, and the constant quotation of the names of Lely and Kneller, infected the mind of Reynolds with a dislike for the works of these two popular painters, which continued to the close of his life.

He thus describes the artists with whom he had to contend in the commencement of his career. "They have got a set of postures, which they apply to all persons indiscriminately; the consequence of which is, that all their pictures look like so many sign post paintings; and if they have a history or a family piece to paint, the first thing they do is to look over their common-place book, containing sketches which they have stolen from various pictures; then they search their prints over and pilfer one figure from one print and another from a second; but never take the trouble of thinking for themselves." From the reproach of dealing in long-established attitudes, Reynolds himself is by no means free; but he never copied a posture which he failed to make his own, by throwing over it the charm of a graceful fancy and the elegance of nature.

The contest with his fellow artists was of short continuance. The works which had gained him celebrity were not the fortunate offspring of some happy moment, but of one who could pour out such pictures in profusion. Better ones were not slow in coming. He painted the second Duke of Devonshire, and this increased his fame. He next painted his patron, Commodore Keppel—and produced a work of such truth and nobleness, that it fixed universal attention. This gallant seaman, in pursuing a privateer, ran his ship aground on the coast of France, and was made prisoner in the midst of his exertions to save his crew from destruction. He was released from prison, and acquitted of all blame by a

court-martial. The portrait represents him just escaped from shipwreck. The artist deviated from the formal style of his rivals, and deviated into excellence. The spirit of a higher species of art is visible in this performance, yet the likeness was reckoned perfect.

But so unsettled is fashion, so fluctuating is taste, so uncertain is a man of genius of obtaining the reward he deserves, and so little can he depend upon the immediate triumph of intellect over pretension, that the popularity of any contemptible competitor annoys and disturbs him. So it happened to Reynolds. One Liotard, a native of Geneva, of little skill and of no genius, but patronised by several noblemen, rose suddenly into distinction and employment. Of this, Reynolds spoke and wrote with much impatience and some bitterness. "The only merit in Liotard's pictures," he says, "is neatness, which, as a general rule, is the characteristic of low genius, or rather no genius at all. His pictures are just what ladies do when they paint for their amusement; nor is there any person, how poor soever their talents may be, but in a very few years, by dint of practice, may possess themselves of every qualification in the art which this *great man* has got." This is sufficiently severe—it is, however, just. The portraits of his rival were fac similes of life—they had no vigor, no elegance, no intellect—they were minute without grace, and labored without beauty. The friends of Liotard, finding that no honor was reflected back upon them by their patronage, withdrew their protection; his name sunk into silence, and he returned to the Continent, leaving an open field and the honor of the victory to Reynolds—the first time that a British painter had triumphed in such a contest. He now removed from Saint Martin's Lane, the Grub street of artists, and took a handsome house on the north side of Great Newport street. His portrait of Keppel, and his picture of the two Grevilles, brother and sister, as Cupid and Psyche—and his success in the contest for distinction with Liotard, brought business in abundance, and his apartments were filled with ladies of quality and with men of rank, all alike desirous to have their persons preserved to posterity by one who touched no subject without adorning it. "The desire to perpetuate the form of self-compla-

gency," says Northcote, "crowded the sitting room of Reynolds with women who wished to be transmitted as angels, and with men who wished to appear as heroes and philosophers. From his pencil they were sure to be gratified. The force and felicity of his portraits not only drew around him the opulence and beauty of the nation, but happily gained him the merited honor of perpetuating the features of all the eminent and distinguished men of learning then living." It is not a little amusing to read Reynolds's lofty commendations of Raphael and Angelo—to observe how warmly he poured out his admiration over the severe dignity of their productions, and how enthusiastically he labored to establish the serene majesty of the "grand style" in opposition to all other works; and then to look at him in his own person—commencing the regular manufacture of faces as soon as he has leisure to establish himself. I sincerely believe, however, that in devoting his pencil to portraits, he not only took the way to fortune, but followed the scope of his nature. He was deficient in the lofty apprehension of a subject; had little power in picturing out vividly scenes from history or from poetry; and through this capital deficiency of imagination was compelled to place in reality before him what others could bring by the force of fancy.

He was now thirty years old, his fame was spread far and wide, and the number of his commissions augmented daily. In the force and grace of expression, and in the natural splendor of coloring, no one could rival him; success begot confidence in his own powers; he tried bolder attitudes and more diversified character, and succeeded in every attempt. A close observer of nature, he laid hold of every happy attitude into which either negligence or study threw the human frame. On one occasion, he observed that a noble person, one of his sitters, instead of looking the way the painter wished, kept gazing at a beautiful picture by one of the old masters. The artist instantly pressed this circumstance into service. "I snatched the moment," he observes, "and drew him in profile with as much of that expression of a pleasing melancholy as my capacity enabled me to hit off. When the picture was finished, he liked it, and particularly for that expression, though, I believe, without reflecting on the occasion of it."

Some time in the year 1754, he acquired the acquaintance, and afterward the friendship, of Samuel Johnson. How this happened, is related by Boswell. The artist was visiting in Devonshire, and in an interval of conversation or study opened the *Life of Savage*. While he was standing with his arm leaning against the chimney-piece, he began to read, and it seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move he found his arm totally benumbed. He was solicitous to know an author, one of whose books had thus enchanted him, and by accident or design he met him at the Miss Cotterals in Newport street. It was Reynolds's good fortune also to make a remark which Johnson perceived could only have arisen in the mind of a man who thought for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations; "You have, however, the comfort," said Reynolds, "of being relieved from the burden of gratitude." They were shocked at this selfish suggestion; but Johnson maintained that it was true to human nature, and on going away, accompanied Reynolds home. Thus commenced a friendship which was continued to old age without much interruption.

The rough and saturnine Johnson was very unlike the soft, the graceful, and flexible Reynolds. The former, the most distinguished man of his time for wit, wisdom, various knowledge, and original vigor of genius, had lived neglected—nay, spurned by the opulent and the titled—till his universal fame forced him on them; and when, after life was half-spent in toil and sorrow, he came forth at length from his obscurity, he spread consternation among the polished circles by his uncouth shape and gestures, more by his ready and vigorous wit, and an incomparable sharpness of sarcasm, made doubly keen and piercing by learning. His circumstances rendered it unnecessary to soothe the proud by assentation, or the beautiful by fine speeches. He appeared among men not to win his way leisurely to the first place by smiles and bows; but to claim it, take it, and keep it, as the distinction to which he was born, and of which he had been too long defrauded. The course which his art required Reynolds to pursue was

far different from this. The temper of Hogarth had injured his practice in portraiture; the lesson had been recently read, and the prudent and sagacious Reynolds resolved not to drive fortune from his door by austerity of manners and surly and intractable independence of spirit. He who would succeed as a portrait painter, must practise the patience and the courtesy of a fine lady's physician. It is not enough to put the sitter into a suitable posture; he must also by conversation move him into a suitable mood of mind, and that natural and unembarrassed ease of expression without which there can be no success. He has, moreover, to keep him thus, throughout the whole of a tedious operation. No one will suppose that the difficulties are less with patients of the softer sex. To the vain and the whimsical, Reynolds opposed constant courtesy, and soothed them by that professional flattery to which they are generally accessible. Disappointment and unmerited neglect had for ever roughened Johnson; his *trade* polished Reynolds. The flattery which the latter practised with his pencil helped to smooth his tongue, and I am surprised that Northcote, a man shrewd and observing, should have been unconscious of this, when he accuses the former of pride, envy and vulgarity, and compares the discourtesy of his inquiring, in the presence of the Duchess of Argyle, "How much, Reynolds, do you think we could win in a week, if we were to work as hard as we could?" with the graceful and accommodating manners of his old master. Reynolds, however—whether from that kind of feeling which induces one man to admire another for what he wants himself, or from a desire of profiting by the wisdom and the wit, the conversational eloquence and opulent understanding of Johnson—cultivated the friendship of the great author assiduously and successfully; and of the fruit which he derived from the intercourse he thus speaks in one of his discourses on art:

"Whatever merit these Discourses may have, must be imputed in a great measure to the education which I may be said to have had under Dr. Johnson. I do not mean to say, though it certainly would be to the credit of these Discourses, if I could say it with truth, that he contributed even a single sentiment to them; but he qualified my mind to think justly. No man had, like him,

the art of teaching inferior minds the art of thinking. Perhaps other men might have equal knowledge, but few were so communicative. His great pleasure was to talk to those who looked up to him. It was here he exhibited his wonderful powers. The observations which he made on poetry, on life, and on every thing about us, I applied to our art—with what success, others must judge."

The price which Reynolds at first received for a *head* was five guineas; the rate increased with his fame, and in the year 1755, his charge was twelve. Experience about this time dictated the following memorandum respecting his art: "For painting the flesh—black, blue-black, white, lake, carmine, orpiment, yellow-ochre, ultramarine and varnish. To lay the pallet—first lay, carmine and white in different degrees; second lay, orpiment and white ditto; third lay, blue-black and white ditto. The first sitting, for expedition, make a mixture as like the sitter's complexion as you can." Some years afterward I find, by a casual notice from Johnson, that Reynolds had raised his price for a head to twenty guineas.

The year 1758 was perhaps the most lucrative of his professional career. The account of the economy of his studies, and the distribution of his time at this period, is curious and instructive. It was his practice to keep all the prints engraved from his portraits, together with his sketches, in a large portfolio; these he submitted to his sitters; and whatever position they selected, he immediately proceeded to copy it upon his canvass, and paint the likeness to correspond. He received six sitters daily, who appeared in their turns; and he kept regular lists of those who sat, and of those who were waiting until a finished portrait should open a vacancy for their admission. He painted them as they stood on his list, and often sent the work home before the colors were dry. Of lounging visitors he had a great abhorrence, and, as he reckoned up the fruits of his labors, "Those idle people," said this disciple of the grand historical school of Raphael and Angelo, "those idle people do not consider that my time is worth five guineas an hour." This calculation incidentally informs us, that it was Reynold's practice, in the height of his reputation and success to paint a portrait in four hours.

His acquaintance with Johnson induced him about this time to write for the *Idler* some papers, on exact imitations of nature and the true conception of beauty. These essays are not remarkable either for vigor or for elegance; they set nothing old in a new light. He claims for painting the privilege of poetry—in selecting fit subjects for the pencil, in imitating what is pure and lofty, and avoiding the mechanical drudgery of copying with a servile accuracy all that nature presents. He asserts that poetry is the sister of painting; that both exercise authority over the realms of imagination; and that the latter alone adds intellectual energy to the productions of fancy. Concerning our conceptions of the beautiful, he says that the productions of nature are all of themselves beautiful; and that custom, rather than the surpassing loveliness of particular objects, directs our admiration. He expended much thought in the composition of these papers, and as they were required by Johnson to meet some sudden emergency, he sat up all night, which occasioned a sharp illness that detained him awhile from his pencil. In these essays, he urges his favorite theory of contemplating and practising the more grave and serenely poetical style of painting, and his love of the religious productions of the great apostles of Romish art is visible in every page. His remarks are deficient in that original spirit which distinguishes the ruder memorandums of Hogarth; and what is odd enough, he seems to comprehend less clearly than the other the scope and character of the works of the great foreign masters, though he had lived long in the daily contemplation of their productions.

Notwithstanding his professional diligence, and the time which he was compelled to yield to the attachment of friends and the curiosity of strangers, he found leisure to note down many useful remarks concerning his art, some of which seem colored by the imagination or moulded by the sagacity of Johnson. "The world," he says, "was weary of the long train of insipid imitators of Claude and Poussin, and demanded something new; Salvator Rosa saw and supplied this deficiency. He struck into a new and savage sort of composition, which was very striking. Sannazarius, the Italian poet, for the same reason, substituted

fishermen for shepherds, and changed the scene to the sea. Want of simplicity is a material imperfection either in conception or in coloring. There is a pure, chaste, modest, as well as a bold, independent, glaring color; men of genius use the one, common minds the other. Some painters think they never can enrich their pictures enough, and delight in gaudy colors and startling contrasts. All hurry and confusion in the composition of the picture should be avoided; it deprives the work of the majesty of repose. When I think on the high principle of the art, it brings to my mind the works of L. Carracci, and the Transfiguration of Raphael. There every figure is ardent and animated, yet all is dignified. A solemnity pervades the whole picture, which strikes every one with awe and reverence." No artist ever had a finer sense of excellence—could distinguish more accurately between various degrees of merit in all the great productions of the pencil, or lay down happier rules for composition. He probably never lived a day without thinking of Raphael or Correggio; he certainly never wrote a professional memorandum without introducing their works or their names; a circumstance which blunts the sting of those lines in *Retaliation*—

"When you talked of your Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff."

The influence of an artist of commanding skill now began to be manifest. Those who admired the moral scenes of the shrewd and sarcastic Hogarth, were no less delighted with the works of one who had all the grace and beauty which long acquaintance with foreign pictures had taught them to admire. It was pleasing to national pride to see an Englishman measure himself successfully with Lely or Vandyke; and personal vanity was hourly pampered by his hand. Commissions continued to pour in—the artist engaged several subordinate laborers, who were skilful in draperies—raised his price in 1760 to twenty-five guineas, and began to lay the foundation of a fortune.

It has been said that Hogarth observed the rising fame of Reynolds with vexation and with envy; but of this I have observed no proofs, either in his works or in his memorandums; and as he was not given to dissembling, but a bold, blunt man, it

seems likely that he would have taken some opportunity of expressing such feelings, if they had really existed. The cold and cautious nature of Reynolds rendered him, in the opinion of Johnson, almost invulnerable; but I think Hogarth would have found a way to plague even him, had he been so disposed. For the envy of Hogarth we have the authority of Nichols, who lived near those times; but his assertion is to be received with caution, if not with distrust; he was no admirer of the man whose character he undertook to delineate, and in the same book, where he depreciated the dead, he deified the living. Hogarth may have laid himself open to such a suspicion by the manner in which he opposed the foundation of public lectures and the establishment of an academy.

In the year 1760 a scheme, long contemplated and often agitated, was carried into execution—the establishment of an exhibition of the works of British artists. Concerning this undertaking, Johnson thus writes to Baretti. “The artists have established a yearly exhibition of pictures and statues, in imitation, I am told, of foreign academies. This year was the second exhibition. They please themselves much with the multitude of spectators, and imagine that the English school will rise much in reputation. Reynolds is without a rival, and continues to add thousands to thousands, which he deserves, among other excellences, by retaining his kindness for Baretti. This exhibition has filled the heads of the artists and lovers of art. Surely life, if it be not long, is tedious; since we are forced to call in the assistance of so many trifles to rid us of our time—of that time which never can return.”

One of the biographers of Reynolds imputes the reflections contained in the conclusion of this letter, “to that kind of envy, which perhaps even Johnson felt, when comparing his own annual gains with those of his more fortunate friends.” They are rather to be attributed to the sense and taste of Johnson, who could not but feel the utter worthlessness of the far greater part of the productions with which the walls of the exhibition room were covered. Artists are very willing to claim for their profession and its productions rather more than the world seems disposed to

concede. It is very natural that this should be so ; but it is also natural that a man of Johnson's cast should be conscious of the dignity of his own pursuits, and agree with the vast majority of mankind in ranking a Homer, a Virgil, a Milton, or a Shakspeare, immeasurably above all the artists that ever painted or carved. Johnson, in a conversation with Boswell, defined painting to be an art "which could illustrate, but could not inform."

The catalogue to this new exhibition was, however, graced with an introduction from the pen of the doctor—which contains the following passage: "An exhibition of the works of art, being a spectacle new in the kingdom, has raised various opinions and conjectures among those who are unacquainted with the practice of foreign nations. Those who set their performances to general view have too often been considered the rivals of each other ; as men actuated, if not by avarice, at least by vanity, as contending for superiority of fame, though not for a pecuniary prize. It can not be denied or doubted that all who offer themselves to criticism are desirous of praise ; this desire is not only innocent but virtuous, while it is undebased by artifice or unpolluted by envy ; and of envy or artifice, those men can never be accused, who, already enjoying all the honors and profits of their profession, are content to stand candidates for public notice with genius yet unexperienced and diligence yet unrewarded ; who, without any hope of increasing their own reputation or interest, expose their names and their works only that they may furnish an opportunity of appearance to the young, the diffident, and the neglected. The purpose of this exhibition is not to enrich the artist, but to advance the art ; the eminent are not flattered with preference, nor the obscure insulted with contempt ; whoever hopes to deserve public favor is here invited to display his merit."

This is very specious and splendid ; but the men of fortune and reputation who planned and directed this work, were more likely to seek stations of importance for their own paintings, than to be solicitous about obtaining such for the labors of the nameless. Positions of precedence were likely to be eagerly contended for among the contributing artists ; and it is probable that Johnson did not pen these conciliatory paragraphs without a secret smile.

In the year 1761, the accumulating thousands which Johnson speaks of, began to have a visible effect on Reynold's establishment. He quitted Newport street, purchased a fine house on the west side of Leicester Square, furnished it with much taste, added a splendid gallery for the exhibition of his works, and an elegant dining room ; and finally taxed his invention and his purse in the production of a carriage, with wheels carved and gilt, and bearing on its panels the four seasons of the year. Those who flocked to see his new gallery were sometimes curious enough to desire a sight of this gay carriage, and the coachman, imitating the hackney who showed the gallery, earned a little money by opening the coach house doors. His sister complained that it was too showy. "What!" said the painter, "would you have one like an apothecary's carriage?"

By what course of study he attained his skill in art, Reynolds has not condescended to tell us ; but of many minor matters we are informed by one of his pupils with all the scrupulosity of biography. His study was octagonal, some twenty feet long, sixteen broad, and about fifteen feet high. The window was small and square, and the sill nine feet from the floor. His sitter's chair moved on castors, and stood above the floor a foot and a half ; he held his palettes by a handle, and the sticks of his brushes were eighteen inches long. He wrought standing, and with great celerity. He rose early, breakfasted at nine, entered his study at ten, examined designs or touched unfinished portraits till eleven brought a sitter ; painted till four ; then dressed, and gave the evening to company.

His table was now elegantly furnished, and round it men of genius were often found. He was a lover of poetry and poets ; they sometimes read their productions at his house, and were rewarded by his approbation, and occasionally by their portraits. Johnson was a frequent and a welcome guest ; though the sage was not seldom sarcastic and overbearing, he was endured and caressed, because he poured out the riches of his conversation more lavishly than Reynolds did his wines. Percy was there too with his ancient ballads and his old English lore ; and Goldsmith with his latent genius, infantine vivacity, and plum-colored coat.

Burke and his brothers were constant guests, and Garrick was seldom absent, for he loved to be where greater men were. It was honorable to this distinguished artist that he perceived the worth of such men, and felt the honor which their society shed upon him; but it stopped not here—he often aided them with his purse, nor insisted upon repayment. It has, indeed, been said that he was uncivil to Johnson, and that once on seeing him in his study, he turned his back on him and walked out; but to offer such an insult was as little in the nature of the courtly painter, as to forgive it was in that of the haughty author. Reynolds seems to have loved the company of literary men more than that of artists; he had little to learn in his profession, and he naturally sought the society of those who had knowledge to impart. They have rewarded him with their approbation; he who has been praised by Burke, and who was loved by Johnson, has little chance of being forgotten.

He obtained the more equivocal approbation of Sterne, of whom he painted a very clever portrait, with the finger on the brow and the head full of thought. The author of *Tristram Shandy*, speaking of his hero's father, says, "Then his whole attitude had been easy, natural, unforced, Reynolds himself, great and graceful as he paints, might have painted him as he sat." The death of Sterne is said to have been hastened by the sarcastic raillery of a lady whom he encountered at the painter's table. He offended her by the grossness of his conversation, and being in a declining state of health, suffered, if we are to believe the story, so severely from her wit—that he went home and died. That man must be singularly sensitive whose life is at the mercy of a woman's sarcasm; the most of us are content to live long after we are laughed at.*

Reynolds' next work, Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy, has been highly praised. Figures of flesh and blood, however, never work well with figures of speech. Shadow and substance

* To poor Sterne there is an inglorious memorial among the nettles of Bayswater burial ground—a wretched headstone, inscribed with the more wretched rhymes of a tipping fraternity of Freemasons. The worst is not yet told; his body was sold by his landlady to defray his lodgings, and was recognized on the dissecting table by one who had caroused with him, and enjoyed his witty and licentious conversation.

can not enter into any conversation ; the player standing irresolute between two such personations is an absurdity which the finest art—and it is not wanting—can not redeem. The soldier pondering between his Catholic and Protestant doxies, in Hogarth's *March to Finchley*, is natural and irresistibly comic ; but David Garrick between his shadowy heroines is another affair.

Reynolds meditated a larger and more elaborate work—a composition displaying Garrick in his various powers as a comic and tragic actor. The principal figure was designed to be David himself, in his own proper dress, speaking a prologue. A little retired were to appear groups of figures in the costume and character of the various heroes, from Hamlet down to Abel Drugger, in the representation of which the actor had obtained his fame. All these were to be portraits, gently modified according to character. This idea was never probably sketched ; it seems strange and unnatural ; there could be no unity, as they were all individual personations, which fitted each other in the ludicrous manner of the scraps composing a medley. Garrick, however, who labored under a double load of vanity as actor and author, was charmed with the idea, and cried out, “That will be the very thing which I desire ; the only way, ——, that I can be handed down to posterity.”

While this eminent actor's portrait was in progress, he mentioned to Reynolds that he once sat to Gainsborough, whose talents he did not admire, and whom he puzzled by altering the expression of his face. Every time the artist turned his back the actor put on a change of countenance, till the former in a passion dashed his pencils on the floor, and cried, “I believe I am painting from the devil rather than from a man.” He sat often to Reynolds for different portraits ; and on one of these occasions complained wofully of the unceasing sarcasms of Foote. “Never mind him,” replied the shrewd painter, “he only shows his sense of his own inferiority ; it is ever the least in talent who becomes malignant and abusive.”

In the year 1762, the health of Reynolds having been impaired by constant labor, he went into Devonshire, accompanied by Johnson. He was welcomed with something of a silent approbation ;

for the populace of England know little, and care less, about either painting, or poetry, or any such matters. The applause too of a man's native place is generally the last which he receives; for those who knew him in youth will not readily allow that in capacity he is superior to themselves, and are apt to regard the coming of his fame among them as an intrusion to be resented. But Reynolds was a man armed in that philosophic calmness which no disappointment could ruffle or disturb. He received a kind welcome from the learned and scientific Muges, and was distinguished by the notice of all men remarkable for knowledge or station. A homage was paid him by one then young and nameless, who has since risen high. "Mr. Reynolds was pointed out to me," says Northcote, "at a public meeting, where a great crowd was assembled. I got as near him as I could, from the pressure of the people, to touch the skirt of his coat, which I did with great satisfaction to my mind." All who have souls to feel the influence of genius will applaud this touch of youthful enthusiasm.

A gentleman whom they visited indulged Johnson with new honey and clouted cream, of which he swallowed so liberally that his entertainer grew alarmed. To the prudent and discreet Reynolds the same person presented a large jar of very old nut oil—a professional prize which the painter carried home in his own coach, regarding it as worthy of his personal attention. He returned to London restored to health, and recommenced his interrupted labors.

His commissions were now so numerous and important, that he found it necessary to have several young persons to aid him in the minor details of his undertakings. It is seldom, however, that pupils work sedulously for their master's benefit; and it is not to every one who cries, "Go to—I will be an artist," that nature has been prodigal. One pupil took to drinking, and died soon; others in various ways annoyed and disappointed him. He was, however, a clear-headed man and a zealous instructor, and seems on the whole to have turned the skill of his young men to some account. He informed Johnson that he was obtaining by his profession six thousand pounds a year—a large income in those days, when portraits brought but twenty-five guineas each.

The Literary Club was founded by Johnson in 1764, and, among other men of eminence and talent, it numbered Reynolds. It is true that he assumed not to himself the distinction which literature bestows, but his friends knew too well the value of his presence to lose it by a fastidious observance of the title of their club. Poets, painters, and sculptors are all brothers; and even had he been less eminent in his art, the sense, information, and manners of Reynolds would have made him an acceptable companion in the most intellectual society. He was, however, rather alarmed on hearing that people spoke of him as "one of the wits," and exclaimed, "Why have they named me as a wit?—I never was a wit in my life." Reynolds had other merits, not unworthy of the consideration of men so out of favor with fortune at that time as Johnson, and Goldsmith, and Burke. He had a heavy purse, and an hospitable table.

In the course of his studies and convivialities he was attacked with a serious illness, which was equally sudden and alarming. He was cheered by the anxiety of many friends, and by the solicitude of Johnson, who wrote from Northamptonshire—"I did not hear of your sickness till I heard likewise of your recovery, and therefore escaped that part of your pain which every man must feel to whom you are known as you are known to me. If the amusement of my company can exhilarate the languor of a slow recovery, I will not delay a day to come to you; for I know not how I can so effectually promote my own pleasure as by pleasing you, or my own interest as by preserving you; in whom, if I should lose you, I should lose almost the only man whom I can call a friend." He to whom Johnson could thus write must have possessed many noble qualities; for no one could estimate human nature more truly than that illustrious man. Our artist recovered slowly, and resumed his studies. The same year which alarmed England respecting the health of Reynolds deprived it of Hogarth.

Lady Sarah Bunbury sacrificing to the Graces, Lady Elizabeth Keppel in the dress she wore when bridesmaid to the Queen, and Lady Waldegrave—one of the beauties of the day—appeared from Reynolds' pencil in 1765, and were regarded by Barry as among the happiest of his works. He commended them for the greatness

of the style, the propriety of the characters, the force of light and shade, and the delicacy of the coloring.

Artists of eminence now rose thick and fast. Barry had made his appearance under the affectionate patronage of Edmund Burke. West landed from Italy to exhibit himself in the character of an historical painter; and the names of others, of scarcely less note, began to be heard of. But the ascendancy of Reynolds was still maintained; he had charmed effectually the public eye, and kept the world chained to him by the strong and enduring link of vanity.

To the *Shakspeare* of Johnson, published in 1765, Reynolds furnished some notes, which show his good sense and good feeling, and are deficient only where no one could have expected him to excel—black-letter reading and old dramatic lore. He had neither the daring ingenuity of a Warburton, nor the philosophical sagacity of a Johnson; but he tasted with as deep a feeling as either the rich excellence of the great dramatist.

From this period to the establishment of the Royal Academy in 1768, Reynolds applied himself diligently to portraiture, and, though he produced few works wherein fancy mingled with and cheated reality, he executed many fine likenesses, among which that of *Mrs. Molesworth* is distinguished for ease and beauty, and the matronly grace and simplicity of costume. Ramsay, the son of a more distinguished father, Allan Ramsay, the poet, and Cotes, another painter of that time, had all the patronage of the court, and were in good employment. Walpole says of Ramsay, that he was the most sensible man of all living artists. Those men stood between Reynolds and royal favor; yet he painted in 1766 the Queen of Denmark, when she was about to go on her unhappy voyage. She seemed impressed with a presentiment of her coming misfortunes, for the artist always found her in tears. Of English artists Burke thus writes to Barry, who was studying at Rome: "Here they are as you left them; Reynolds now and then striking out some wonder." He says, in another letter, "I found that Reynolds' expectation of what would be your great object of attention were the works of Michael Angelo, whom he considers as the Homer of painting. I could find that his own study had

been much engrossed by that master, whom he still admires most. He confined himself for months to the *Capella Sistina*."

The Royal Academy was planned and proposed in 1768 by Chambers, West, Cotes, and Moser; the caution or timidity of Reynolds kept him for some time from assisting. A list of thirty members was made out; and West, a prudent and amiable man, called on Reynolds, and, in a conference of two hours' continuance, succeeded in persuading him to join them. He ordered his coach, and, accompanied by West, entered the room where his brother artists were assembled. They rose up to a man, and saluted him "President." He was affected by the compliment, but declined the honor till he had talked with Johnson and Burke; he went, consulted his friends, and having considered the consequences carefully, then consented. He expressed his belief at the same time that their scheme was a mere delusion; the King, he said, would not patronise nor even acknowledge them, as his majesty was well known to be the friend of another body—The Incorporated Society of Artists.

The plan of that Society (established in 1765) had failed to embrace all the objects necessary for the advancement of art; several painters of reputation were not of their number; and the new institution, now formed for the purpose of extending the usefulness of such a scheme, was the work of many heads. Much that was old was adopted, something new was added, and the whole was carefully matured into a simple and consistent plan. The professed objects were, an academy of design for the instruction of students, and an annual exhibition which should contain the works of the academicians, and admit at the same time all other productions of merit. The funds for the furtherance of this design were to come from the fruits of the annual exhibition. The King, who at first looked coldly upon the project, as it seemed set up in opposition to the elder society, on farther consideration offered voluntarily to supply all deficiencies annually from his private purse. This enabled the members to propose rewards for the encouragement of rising genius; and at a future period to bestow annuities on the most promising students, to defray their expenses during a limited residence at Rome. Johnson was made

professor of ancient literature, a station merely honorary—and Goldsmith professor of ancient history, another office without labor and without emolument—which secured him a place, says Percy, at the yearly dinner. Of this honor Goldsmith thus writes to his brother: “I took it rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to myself. Honors to one in my situation are something like ruffles to a man who wants a shirt.” Lastly, the King, to give dignity to the Royal Academy of Great Britain, bestowed the honor of knighthood on the President; and seldom has any such distinction been bestowed amid more universal approbation. Burke, in one of his admirable letters to Barry, says, “Reynolds is at the head of this academy. From his known public spirit, and warm desire of raising up art among us, he will, I have no doubt, contrive this institution to be productive of all the advantages that could possibly be derived from it; and while it is in such hands as his, we shall have nothing to fear from those shallows and quicksands upon which the Italian and French academies have lost themselves.” Johnson was so elated with the honor of knighthood conferred on his friend, that he drank wine in its celebration, though he had abstained from it for several years; and Burke declared there was a natural fitness in the name for a title. Of his election as President, Northcote (no hasty writer) says, what I would fain disbelieve, “that he refused to belong to the society on any other conditions.” How this is to be reconciled with his confusion and surprise at being hailed President, as above described, I can not determine. The gentleman who relates it is cautious and candid, and would not hazard such an assertion lightly. Of Sir Joshua’s capacity to fill the station of President, and to render it respectable by his courtesy and embellish it by his talents, no one ever entertained a doubt; but it was unworthy of him to stipulate for it.

He voluntarily imposed on himself the task of composing and delivering discourses for the instruction of students in the principles and practice of their art. Of these he wrote fifteen; all distinguished for clearness of conception, and for variety of knowledge. They were delivered during a long succession of years, and in a manner cold and sometimes embarrassed, and even

unintelligible. His deafness, and his abhorrence of oratorical pomp of utterance, may have contributed to this defect. A nobleman who was present at the delivery of the first of the series, said, "Sir Joshua, you read your discourse in a tone so low that I scarce heard a word you said." "That was to my advantage," replied the President, with a smile.

He distinguished himself in the first exhibition of the Academy by paintings of the Duchess of Manchester and her son, as Diana disarming Cupid; Lady Blake, as Juno receiving the cestus from Venus; and Miss Morris, as Hope nursing Love. The grace of design and beauty of coloring in these pictures, could not conceal the classical affectation of their titles, and the poverty of invention in applying such old and exhausted compliments. Poor Miss Morris was no dandler of babes, but a delicate and sensitive spinster, unfit for the gross wear and tear of the stage—who fainted in the representation of Juliet, and died soon after. Of Lady Blake's title to represent Juno, I have nothing to say—a modern lord would make an indifferent Jupiter, and what claim a Duchess of Manchester, with her last-born in her lap, could have to the distinction of Diana, it is difficult to guess.

Sir Joshua guided his pen with better taste than his pencil, in the first year of his presidency. He, at the request of Burke, addressed a letter of advice to Barry, which made a strong impression on the mind of that singular man. "Whoever," says Sir Joshua, "is resolved to excel in painting, or indeed in any other art, must bring all his mind to bear upon that one object from the moment that he rises till he goes to bed; the effect of every object that meets a painter's eye, may give him a lesson, provided his mind is calm, unembarrassed with other objects, and open to instruction. This general attention, with other studies connected with the art, which must employ the artist in his closet, will be found sufficient to fill up life, if it were much longer than it is. Were I in your place, I would consider myself as playing a great game, and never suffer the little malice and envy of my rivals to draw off my attention from the main object, which if you pursue with a steady eye, it will not be in the power of all the Cicerones in the world to hurt you. While they are endeavoring to prevent the gentle-

men from employing the young artists, instead of injuring them, they are in my opinion doing them the greatest service.

“Whoever has great views, I would recommend to him while at Rome, rather to live on bread and water than lose advantages which he can never hope to enjoy a second time, and which he will find only in the Vatican; where, I will engage, no cavalier sends his student to copy for him. The Capella Sistina is the production of the greatest genius that was ever employed in the arts; it is worth considering by what principles that stupendous greatness of style is produced, and endeavoring to produce something of your own on those principles, will be a more advantageous method of study than copying the St. Cecelia in the Borg-hese, or the Herodias of Guido, which may be copied to eternity without contributing a jot towards making a man a more able painter. If you neglect visiting the Vatican often, and particularly the Capella Sistina, you will neglect receiving that peculiar advantage which Rome can give above all other cities in the world. In other places you will find casts from the antique, and capital pictures of the great painters; but it is there only that you can form an idea of the dignity of the art, as it is there only that you can see the works of Michael Angelo and Raphael.” Barry, who at that time was awed by the fame of Reynolds, received this letter with thankfulness, and acknowledged it with civility; but his precipitancy of nature hindered him from profiting much by it.

When Goldsmith published his *Deserted Village*, he inscribed it to Sir Joshua in a very kind and touching manner. “The only dedication I ever made,” says the author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, “was to my brother, because I loved him better than most other men. He is since dead. Permit me to inscribe this poem to you.” The poet was a frequent guest with Johnson at the table of the painter, which was adorned and enlivened by the presence and the talents of Miss Reynolds—herself a painter and poetess, and eminent for her good sense and ready wit. This lady was a great favorite of Johnson, who was fond of her company, and acknowledged oftener than once the influence of her conversation.

I have already said that Reynolds was an admirer of Pope. A fan, which the poet presented to Martha Blount, and on which he had painted, with his own hand, the story of Cephalus and Procris, with the motto "Aura Veni," was to be sold by auction, and Sir Joshua sent a person to bid for it as far as thirty guineas. The messenger imagined that he said thirty shillings, and allowed the relic to go for two pounds; a profit, however, was allowed to the purchaser, and it was put into the hand of the painter. "See," said he to his pupils, who gathered round him, "see the painting of Pope—this must always be the case when the work is taken up from idleness, and is laid aside when it ceases to amuse; it is like the work of one who paints only for amusement. Those who are resolved to excel must go to their work, willing or unwilling, morning, noon, and night; they will find it to be no play, but very hard labor." This fan was afterward stolen out of his study; as a relic of that importance can not be openly displayed to the world by the person who abstracts it, it is not easy to imagine what manner of enthusiast the thief could be.

At a festive meeting, where Johnson, Reynolds, Burke, Garrick, Douglas, and Goldsmith were conspicuous, the idea of composing a set of extempore epitaphs on one another was started. Two very indifferent lines of ordinary waggery by Garrick offended Goldsmith so much that he avenged himself by composing the celebrated poem of Retaliation, in which he exhibits the characters of his companions with great liveliness and talent. The character of Sir Joshua Reynolds is drawn with discrimination and delicacy; it resembles, indeed, his own portraits, for the features are a little softened, and the expression a little elevated; it is, nevertheless, as near the truth as the affection of the poet would permit him to come. The lines have a melancholy interest, from being the last which the author wrote.

"Here Reynolds is laid, and to tell you my mind,
He has not left a wiser or better behind;
His pencil was striking, resistless, and grand;
His manners were gentle, complying, and bland;
Still born to improve us in every part,
His pencil our faces, his manners our heart."

That he was an improver of human faces no one could be

more conscious than Goldsmith; his portrait by Reynolds is sufficiently unlovely, yet it was said by the artist's sister to be the most flattered likeness of all her brother's works.

In 1771, James Northcote became his pupil. Of his coming he thus speaks:—"As from the earliest period of my being able to make any observation, I had conceived Reynolds to be the greatest painter that ever lived, it may be conjectured what I felt when I found myself in his house as his scholar." He unites with Malone in assuring us that such was the gentleness of Sir Joshua's manners, such his refined habits, such the splendor of his establishment and the extent of his fame—that almost all the men in the three kingdoms who were distinguished for attainments in literature, for fame in art, or for exertions at the bar, in the senate, or the field, were occasionally found feasting at his social and well-furnished table.

These accounts, however, in as far as regards the splendor of the entertainments must be received with some abatement. The eye of a youthful pupil was a little blinded by enthusiasm—that of Malone was rendered friendly by many acts of hospitality and a handsome legacy; while literary men and artists, who came to speak of books and paintings, cared little for the most part about the delicacy of their entertainment, provided it were wholesome. Take the following description of one of the painter's dinners by the skilful hand of Courteney: "There was something singular in the style and economy of his table, that contributed to pleasantry and good humor; a coarse, inelegant plenty, without any regard to order or arrangement. A table prepared for seven or eight, often compelled to contain fifteen or sixteen. When this pressing difficulty was got over, a deficiency of knives and forks, plates, and glasses succeeded. The attendance was in the same style; and it was absolutely necessary to call instantly for beer, bread or wine, that you might be supplied before the first course was over. He was once prevailed on to furnish the table with decanters and glasses for dinners, to save time and prevent the tardy manœuvres of two or three occasional undisciplined domestics. As these accelerating utensils were demolished in the course of service, Sir Joshua could never be persuaded to replace them.

But these trifling embarrassments only served to enhance the hilarity and singular pleasure of the entertainment. The wine, cookery, and dishes were but little attended to; nor was the fish or venison ever talked of or recommended. Amid this convivial animated bustle among his guests, our host sat perfectly composed, always attentive to what was said, never minding what was eat or drank, but left every one at perfect liberty to scramble for himself. Temporal and spiritual peers, physicians, lawyers, actors, and musicians composed the motley group, and played their parts without dissonance or discord. At five o'clock precisely, dinner was served, whether all the invited guests were arrived or not. Sir Joshua was never so fashionably ill-bred as to wait an hour perhaps for two or three persons of rank or title and put the rest of the company out of humor by this invidious distinction."

Of the sluttish abundance which covered his table, Courteney says enough; as to the character of the guests, we have the testimony of Dunning, afterward Lord Ashburton. He had accepted an invitation to dinner from the artist, and happened to be the first guest who arrived; a large company was expected. "Well, Sir Joshua," he said, "and who have you got to dine with you to-day? The last time I dined in your house, the company was of such a sort, that by — I believe all the rest of the world enjoyed peace for that afternoon." "This observation," says Northcote, "was by no means ill applied, for as Sir Joshua's companions were chiefly men of genius, they were often disputatious and vehement in argument." Miss Reynolds seems to have been as indifferent about the good order of her domestics, and the appearance of her dishes at table, as her brother was about the active distribution of his wine and venison. Plenty was the splendor, and freedom was the elegance which Malone and Boswell found in the entertainments of the artist.

The masculine freedom of Johnson's conversation was pleasing in general to Reynolds; it was not, however, always restrained by a sense of courtesy or by the memory of benefits. It is related by Mrs. Thrale that once at her table Johnson lamented the perishable nature of the materials of painting, and recommended copper in place of wood or canvass. Reynolds urged the difficul-

ty of finding a plate of copper large enough for historical subjects ; he was interrupted by Johnson. "What foppish obstacles are these ; here is Thrale, who has a thousand-tun copper ; you may paint it all round if you will, I suppose it will serve him to brew in afterward." When Johnson's pen was in his hand, and it was seldom out of it, he spoke of painting in another mood, and of Reynolds with civility and affection. "Genius," he says, "is chiefly exerted in historical pictures, and the art of the painter of portraits is often lost in the obscurity of the subject. But it is in painting as in life ; what is greatest is not always best. I should grieve to see Reynolds transfer to heroes and to goddesses, to empty splendor and to airy fiction, that art which is now employed in diffusing friendship, in renewing tenderness, in quickening the affections of the absent, and continuing the presence of the dead. Every man is always present to himself, and has, therefore, little need of his own resemblance ; nor can desire it, but for the sake of those whom he loves and by whom he hopes to be remembered. This use of the art is a natural and reasonable consequence of affection ; and though, like all other human actions, it is often complicated with pride, yet even such pride is more laudable than that by which palaces are covered with pictures, that, however excellent, neither imply the owner's virtue nor excite it." By an opinion so critically sagacious, and an apology for portrait painting, which appeals so effectually to the kindly side of human nature, Johnson repaid a hundred dinners.

Reynolds now raised his price for a portrait to thirty-five guineas, admitted some more pupils to the advantages of his studio, and, leaving them to forward draperies and make copies of some of his pictures in his absence, made a visit to Paris. Of the object of this journey there is no account, nor has he made any note of his own emotions on observing the works of the French artists. He returned, and resumed his labors—which were too pressing to permit him to visit Bennet Langton, at his country seat—though they allowed him to obey the King's wish, and see the installation of the Knights of the Garter, in Windsor ; on which occasion his curiosity paid the tax of a new hat and a gold snuff-box, pilfered in the crowd.

Young Northcote acquired skill rapidly under Sir Joshua; he ere long painted one of the servants so like nature that a tame macaw mistook the painting for the original, against whom it had a grudge, and flew to attack the canvass with beak and wing. The experiment of the creature's mistake was several times repeated with the same success, and Reynolds compared it to the ancient painting where a bunch of grapes allured the birds; "I see," said he, "that birds and beasts are as good judges of pictures as men."

The Ugolino was painted in 1778. The subject is contained in the *Comedia* of Dante, and is said by Cumberland to have been suggested to our artist by Goldsmith. The merit lies in the execution; and even this seems of a disputable excellence. The lofty and stern sufferer of Dante appears on Reynold's canvass like a famished mendicant, deficient in any commanding qualities of intellect, and regardless of his dying children who cluster around his knees. It is indeed a subject too painful to contemplate; it has a feeling too deep for art, and certainly demanded a hand conversant with severer things than the lips and necks of ladies, and the well dressed gentlemen of England. It is said to have affected Captain Cooke's Omiah so much, that he imagined it a scene of real distress, and ran to support the expiring child. The Duke of Dorset paid the artist four hundred guineas, and took home the picture. His next piece, the *Children in the Wood*, arose from an accident. A beggar's infant, who was his model for some other picture, overpowered by continuing long in one position, fell asleep, and presented the image of one of the babes, which he immediately secured. No sooner had he done this than the child turned in its sleep, and presented the idea of the other babe, which he instantly sketched, and from them afterward made the finished picture. Accident often supplies what study can not find; for nature, when unrestrained, throws itself into positions of great ease and elegance.

In the month of July he visited Oxford, where he was received with some distinction, and admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law. At that period he was member of the Royal, the Antiquarian, and Dilettanti Societies. When he presented

himself to the audience, and bowed and took his seat, there was much applause. Dr. Beattie accompanied him, and received the same honors. It seems a singular token of respect to salute a man with a title to which he can neither lay claim by his learning nor by his pursuits; but in our own time we have seen Blucher and Platoff dubbed Doctors of Law in the same venerable place. From Oxford, Reynolds went to visit a noble Duke, in compliance with many pressing solicitations. He hastened into his presence, and was mortified with a cold reception. The artist, it seems, had the incivility to appear in his boots!

On his return to London, he painted the celebrated picture of Dr. Beattie in his Oxonian dress as Doctor of Laws, with his book on the Immutability of Truth below his arm, and the Angel of Truth beside him overpowering Skepticism, Sophistry, and Infidelity. One of these prostrate figures has a lean and profligate look, and resembles Voltaire; in another, which is plump and full bodied, some one recognized a resemblance to Hume; nor is it unlikely that the artist had Gibbon in his thoughts when he introduced Infidelity. The vexation of Goldsmith, when he saw this painting, overflowed all bounds. "It is unworthy," he said, "of a man of eminence like you, Sir Joshua, to descend to flattery such as this. How could you think of degrading so high a genius as Voltaire before so mean a writer as Beattie. Beattie and his book will be forgotten in ten years; but your allegorical picture and the fame of Voltaire will live to your disgrace as a flatterer." There was as much good sense as envy in this. The picture was an inconsiderate compliment, and arose from the false estimate which Reynolds had formed of the genius of Beattie. The royal favor and the applause of the church are excellent in their day, and may float a man on to fortune; but posterity is an inexorable tribunal, which overthrows all false estimates of character—all unsound reputations, and decides upon merit and genius alone. Hume, and Voltaire, and Gibbon—injurious as their works have been to the best interests of mankind—have survived the attack of Beattie and the insult of Reynolds.

About the close of summer he visited his native place, and was elected Mayor of Plympton—a distinction so much to his liking

that he assured the King, whom he accidentally encountered on his return, in one of the walks at Hampton court, that it gave him more pleasure than any other he had ever received—"excepting (he added—recollecting himself)—excepting that which your Majesty so graciously conferred on me—the honor of knighthood."

The arts now met with a repulse from the church, which is often mentioned with sorrow by the painters, and even considered as an injury deserving annual reprobation. It happened that Reynolds and West were dining with the bishop of Bristol, who was also Dean of St. Paul's, and their conversation turned upon religious paintings, and upon the naked appearance of the English churches in the absence of such ornaments. West generously offered his entertainer a painting of Moses and the Laws for the Cathedral of St. Paul, and Reynolds tendered a Nativity. As this offer was in a manner fulfilling the original design of Sir Christopher Wren, the Dean imagined it would be received with rapture by all concerned. He waited on the King, who gave his ready consent; but Terrick, Bishop of London, objected at once, and no persuasion could move him, no arguments could change his fixed and determined opposition. A little of the old spirit, which ejected the whole progeny of saints and Madonnas out of the reformed church, was strong in this Bishop of London. "No," said he, "while I live and have power, no popish paintings shall enter the doors of the metropolitan church." The project was dropped, and never again revived.

A portrait of Burke, which Reynolds painted at the request of Thrale, is the only reason that has ever been assigned for the hostility which Barry now began to show, first, to Burke, and afterward to Sir Joshua. Barry was a proud artist and a suspicious man; he could not be insensible that the President had amassed a fortune, and obtained high fame in abiding by the lucrative branch of the profession, while he had perched upon the unproductive bough of historical composition, and had not been rewarded with bread. He followed his own ideas in the course he pursued, but probably he reflected that he was also obeying the reiterated injunctions of Sir Joshua, who constantly, in his public lectures and private counsels, admonished all who loved what was

noble and sublime, to study the great masters, and labor at the grand style. This study had brought Barry to a garret and a crust; the neglect of it had spread the table of Reynolds with that sluttish abundance which Courteney describes, and put him in a coach with gilded wheels, and the seasons painted on its panels. To all this was added the close friendship of his patron Burke with the fortunate painter. Barry fancied—in short—that his own merits were overlooked, and that something like a combination was formed to thwart and depress him. Nor is the mild and prudent Reynolds himself altogether free from the suspicion of having felt a little jealousy towards one who spoke well, and thought well, and painted well, and who *might* rise to fame and epulence rivalling his own.

Goldsmith was removed by death, in 1774, from the friendship of Reynolds, who was deeply affected; he did not touch his pencil for a whole day afterward. He acted as executor—an easy trust—for there was nothing left but a large debt and a confused mass of papers. He directed his funeral, which was respectable and private, and aided largely in the monument which stands in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. Nollekens cut the marble; Johnson composed the epitaph.

To the society called the Dilettanti Club some ascribe the origin of all those associations whose object is the encouragement of art. To this club, as has been duly mentioned, Sir Joshua belonged, and to his pencil many of the members are indebted for the transmission of their looks—and names—to posterity. These portraits are contained in two pictures, in the manner of Paul Veronese, and amount in all to fourteen. He was more worthily employed when Johnson sat to him in 1775; the picture shows him holding a manuscript near his face, and pondering as he reads. The near-sighted "Cham of literature" reproved the painter in these words: "It is not friendly to hand down to posterity the imperfections of any man." Mrs. Thrale interposed, and said, "You will not be known to posterity for your defects, though Sir Joshua should do his worst." The artist was right—he gave individuality and character to the head.

His practice introduced him occasionally to strange acquaint-

ances. A gentleman, who returned rich from the East, sat for his portrait, but was called into the country before it was quite finished. He apologized by letter for his absence, and requested that the work might be completed. "My friends," said he, "tell me of the Titian tint and the Guido air—these you can add without my appearance."

Sir Joshua was chosen a member of the Academy of Florence, and in consequence he painted and presented a portrait of himself in the dress of his Oxford honors, which is placed in the gallery of Eminent Artists in that city. This prudent Italian academy requires by its laws the portrait of every new member, painted by his own hand; a regulation which has accumulated a very curious collection. Sir Joshua's performance raised the reputation of English art in Florence.

It was his opinion that no man ever produced more than half a dozen original works in his whole lifetime; and when he painted the Strawberry Girl, he said, "that is one of *my* originals." On looking at this work it is not easy to see the cause of the artist's preference; but genius sometimes forms curious estimates of its own productions—some lucky triumph over an obstinate difficulty—some work produced with great ease in an hour of enjoyment—or one, the offspring of much consideration, and the crowning of some new experiment, is apt to impress an idea of excellence on the maker's mind which his work fails to communicate to the cold spectator.

From secret envy he had not hitherto escaped; he was now to experience an open attack, and that from one of his own profession. A painter of the name of Hone—a man of some experience in portrait painting, but of very moderate talents—sent to the annual exhibition, "The Pictorial Conjuror, displaying his whole art of Optical Deception." This was meant as a satire upon the style of Sir Joshua, and of the use which he was not unwilling to make of the postures and characters of earlier artists. The indignation of the friends of Reynolds was great—they rejected the offensive picture in the exhibition, and defended him with tongue and pen. "He has been accused of plagiarism," says one, "for having borrowed attitudes from ancient masters. Not only can-

dor, but criticism must deny the force of this charge. When a single posture is imitated from an historic picture, and applied to a portrait in a different dress, this is not plagiarism, but quotation; and a quotation from a great author, with a novel application of the sense, has always been allowed to be an instance of parts and taste, and may have more merit than the original." The parallel entirely fails. To give a new turn to the sense of a sentence, or avail himself of a line or two from an early author, is allowed to a modern poet. But should he bring away an entire character, and employ it with the whole costume of thought unaltered, then he is a plagiarist; and such in many instances seems to have been Sir Joshua. His best defence is, that he borrowed to improve, and stole that he might show his own power of coloring. Most of the songs of Burns, works unrivalled for nature and passion, are constructed on the stray verse or vagrant line of some forgotten bard. But then the poet only employed those as the starting notes to his own inimitable strains, and never stole the fashion and hue of any entire lyric.

An attack such as that of Hone seemed to affect the friends of the artist more than it did himself; he said nothing, and the subject passed to oblivion. One of a more serious nature, and less easy to refute, was made in some of the public prints concerning the instability of the colors which he used in painting. He was accused of employing lake and carmine—colors of a nature liable to speedy decay—and, in short, making frequent experiments at the expense of others. It was urged, that he knew those glossy and gaudy colors would not endure long; and it was hinted, that though the experiments which he made might be for the advancement of art, they were injurious to individuals, who purchased blooming works, which were destined to fade in their possession like the flowers of the field.

Of the danger of using such colors Sir Joshua was at length convinced; but not until strong symptoms of decay had appeared in many of his own works; as yet he zealously defended the propriety of his experiments with his pen as well as in conversation. In one of his memorandums he says, with much complacency, "I was always willing to believe that my uncertainty of proceeding

in my works—that is, my never being sure of my hand, and my frequent alterations—arose from a refined taste, which could not acquiesce in any thing short of a high degree of excellence. I had not an opportunity of being early initiated in the principles of coloring; no man indeed could teach me. If I have never settled with respect to coloring, let it at the same time be remarked that my unsteadiness in this respect proceeded from an inordinate desire to possess every kind of excellence that I saw in the works of others, without considering that there are in coloring, as in style, excellences which are incompatible with each other. We all know how often those masters who sought after coloring changed their manner; while others, merely from not seeing various modes, acquiesced all their lives in that with which they set out. On the contrary, I tried every effect of color, and, by leaving out every color in its turn, showed each color that I could do without it. As I alternately left out every color, I tried every new color; and often, as is well known, failed. I was influenced by no idle or foolish affectation. My fickleness in the mode of coloring arose from an eager desire to attain the highest excellence. This is the only merit I can assume to myself from my conduct in that respect.”

It is to be regretted that he continued these experiments for a long course of years, and that they infected more or less many of the finest of his works. He was exceedingly touchy of temper on the subject of coloring, and reproved Northcote with some sharpness for insinuating that Kneller used vermilion in his flesh color. “What signifies,” said he, “what a man used who could not color?—you may use it if you will.” He never allowed his pupils to make experiments, and on observing one of them employing some unusual compounds, exclaimed, “That boy will never do good with his gallipots of varnish and foolish mixtures.” The secret of Sir Joshua’s own preparations was carefully kept—he permitted not even the most favored of his pupils to acquire the knowledge of his colors—he had all securely locked, and allowed no one to enter where these treasures were deposited. What was the use of all this secrecy?—those who stole the mystery of his colors could not use it unless they stole his skill and talent also. A man

who, like Reynolds, chooses to take upon himself the double office of public and private instructor of students in painting, ought not, surely, to retain to himself a secret in the art which he considers to be of real value.

He was fond of seeking into the secrets of the old painters; and dissected some of their performances without remorse or scruple, to ascertain their mode of laying on color and finishing with effect. Titian he conceived to be the great master spirit in portraiture; and no enthusiast in usury ever sought more incessantly for the secret of the philosopher's stone, than did Reynolds to possess himself of the whole theory and practice of the Venetian. But this was a concealed pursuit; he disclosed his discoveries to none; he lectured on Michael Angelo, and discoursed on Raphael; but he studied and dreamed of Titian. "To possess," said the artist, "a real fine picture by that great master, I would sell all my gallery—I would willingly ruin myself." The capital old paintings of the Venetian school which Sir Joshua's experiments destroyed, were not few, and it may be questioned if his discoveries were a compensation for their loss. The wilful destruction of a work of genius is a sort of murder, committed for the sake of art; and the propriety of the act is very questionable. "I considered myself," said he, in a private memorandum preserved by Malone, "as playing a great game, and, instead of beginning to save money, I laid it out as fast as I got it in purchasing the best examples of art; I even borrowed money for this purpose. The possessing portraits by Titian, Vandyke, Rembrandt, &c., I considered as the best kind of wealth. By this kind of contemplation we are taught to think in their way, and sometimes to attain their excellence. If I had never seen any of the works of Correggio, I should never, perhaps, have remarked in nature the expression which I find in one of his pieces; or if I had remarked it, I might have thought it too difficult, or perhaps impossible to be executed."

In the summer of 1776, Northcote informed Sir Joshua of his intention of visiting Italy, to confirm his own notions of excellence by studying in the Vatican. This communication, which deprived him of a profitable assistant, was received with much

complacency; he was sensible of the advantages obtained from his pupil's pencil, and said so with much freedom and kindness. "Remember," said the master, to his departing friend, "that something more must be done than that which did formerly—Kneller, Lely, and Hudson, will not do now." He seldom omitted an opportunity of insulting the memories of Kneller and Lely. He might have spared them now that the world admitted him to have excelled them.

He was skilful in compliments. When he painted the portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse, he wrought his name on the border of her robe. The great actress conceiving it to be a piece of classic embroidery, went near to examine, and seeing the words, smiled. The artist bowed and said, "I could not lose this opportunity of sending my name to posterity on the hem of your garment." He painted his name, in the same manner, on the embroidered edge of the drapery of Lady Cockburn's portrait. When this picture was taken into the exhibition room, such was the sweetness of the conception, and the splendor of the coloring, that the painters who were busied with their own performances, acknowledged its beauty by clapping their hands. Such eager admiration is of rare occurrence among brothers of the trade.

The tardy praise which he wrung from artists was amply compensated by that of others. The surly applause of Johnson, and the implied admiration of Goldsmith, were nothing compared to the open and avowed approbation of Burke. That extraordinary man possessed a natural sagacity, which opened the door of every mystery in art or literature; his praise is always warm, but well placed; he feels wisely and thinks in the true spirit. His debt of gratitude to Sir Joshua was never liquidated by affected rapture. The artist had reason to be proud of the affection of Burke. He sometimes asked his opinion on the merit of a work—it was given readily—Sir Joshua would then shake his head and say, "Well, it pleases you; but it does not please me; there is a sweetness wanting in the expression which a little pains will bestow—there! I have improved it." This, when translated into the common language of life, means, "I must not let this man think that he is

as wise as myself; but show him that I can reach one step at least higher than his admiration."

That Reynolds was a close observer of nature, his works sufficiently show; he drew his excellence from innumerable sources; paid attention to all opinions; from the rudest minds he sometimes obtained valuable hints, and babes and sucklings were among his tutors. It was one of his maxims that the gestures of children, being all dictated by nature, are graceful; and that affectation and distortion come in with the dancing master. He watched the motions of the children who came to his gallery, and was pleased when he saw them forget themselves and mimic unconsciously the airs and attitudes of the portraits on the wall. They were to him more than Raphael had ever been. "I can not but think," he thus expresses himself in one of his memorandums, "that Apelles' method of exposing his pictures for public criticism was a very good one. I do not know why the judgment of the vulgar, on the mechanical parts of painting, should not be as good as any whatever; for instance, as to whether such or such a part be natural or not. If one of these persons should ask why half the face is black, or why there is such a spot of black or snuff, as they will call it, under the nose, I should conclude from thence that the shadows are thick or dirtily painted, or that the shadow under the nose was too much resembling snuff, when, if those shadows had exactly resembled the transparency and color of nature, they would have no more been taken notice of than the shadow in nature itself." Such were the sound and sagacious opinions of this eminent man when he sat down to think for himself and speak from practice.

He had a decided aversion to loquacious artists; and spoke little himself while he was busied at his easel. When artists love to be admired for what they say, they will have less desire to be admired for what they paint. He had, in truth, formed a very humble notion of the abstract meditation which art requires, and imagined it to be more of a practical dexterity of hand than the offspring of intellect and skill. He assured Lord Monboddo that painting scarcely deserved the name of study; it was more that sort of work (he said) which employed the mind without fatiguing

it, and was thereby more conducive to individual happiness than the practice of any other profession. This Northcote pronounces to be the speech of a mere portrait manufacturer; but genius, when congenially employed, is seldom conscious of exertion.

Dr. Johnson, when questioned by Boswell on the merit of portraits said, "Sir, their chief excellence is being like; I would have them in the dress of their times, to preserve the accuracy of history—truth, sir, is of the greatest value in these things." To give the exact form and pressure of the man, and animate him with his natural portion of intellect and no more, requires a skilful hand, and a head which the love of flattering is unable to seduce from the practice of truth. To paint a likeness is, however, a very common effort of a very common mind; but to bestow proper expression, just character, and unstudied ease, is infinitely difficult. Reynolds said he could teach any boy whom chance might throw in his way to paint a likeness. "To paint like Velasquez is another thing. He did at once, and with ease, what we can not accomplish with time and labor. Portraits, as well as written characters of men, should be decidedly marked, otherwise they will be insipid, and truth should be preferred before freedom of hand."

In 1777 he had delivered seven discourses on art, which he collected into a volume, and, that they might want no attraction to recommend them to popularity, he inscribed them to the King in a dedication written with care and caution, and neither deficient in self-approbation, nor unadorned by classical allusion.

He was an ardent lover of his profession, and ever as ready to defend it when assailed as to add to its honors by the works of his hands. When Dr. Tucker, the famous Dean of Gloucester, asserted before the Society for encouraging Commerce and Manufactures that a pin-maker was a more useful and valuable member of society than Raphael, Sir Joshua was nettled, and replied with some asperity; "This is an observation of a very narrow mind; a mind that is confined to the mere object of commerce—that sees with a microscopic eye but a part of the great machine of the economy of life, and thinks that small part which he sees to be the whole. Commerce is the means, not the end, of happiness or pleasure;

the end is a rational enjoyment by means of arts and sciences. It is therefore the highest degree of folly to set the means in a higher rank of esteem than the end. It is as much as to say that the brickmaker is superior to the architect."

Sir Joshua now painted another portrait of Johnson at the request of Mr. Thrale. This seems to have been accomplished without any of those bickerings which distinguished the former sittings. Reynolds observed once to an acquaintance, that knowledge was not the only advantage to be obtained in the company of such a man—that the importance of truth and the baseness of falsehood were inculcated more by example than by precept, and that all who were of the Johnsonian school were remarkable for a love of truth and accuracy. One day Boswell was speaking in high commendation of the Doctor's skill and felicity in drawing characters; Sir Joshua said—"He is undoubtedly admirable in this; but in order to mark the characters which he draws, he overcharges them, and gives people more than they have, whether of good or bad." It would be difficult to express more neatly and simply the character of our artist's own portraiture. He bestowed beauty and mind with no sparing hand. Every captain has the capacity of a general, and every lord a soul fit for wielding the energies of an empire.

Reynolds was now fifty-four years old—he had acquired fame and amassed a fortune—yet such was his unabated activity, that he continued to paint with the avidity of one laboring for bread; nor is there any proof that he even wished to confine himself to personages of note and talent. He raised his price to fifty guineas, without lessening the number of his commissions; he was in the wane of life; the wise were anxious to secure as many proofs of his genius as they could before he went—and the rich were glad of the increased price, for it excluded the poor from indulging in the luxury of vanity.

This fortunate man began now to have warnings of the kind which wait plentifully on advancing years. Goldsmith had gone; Garrick followed—and bodily decay was visibly creeping over Johnson. Reynolds himself—a frugal liver and a cautious man—was still hale and robust; he had painted one generation, was

painting a second, and, in the opinion of the third, he promised to last to give them the benefit of his skill. He had no thought, indeed, of retiring to spend in leisure the money he had gathered; painting was to him enjoyment; and he knew that if he withdrew from the scene, much of his social distinction would fall from about him. The powerful and the rich are soon willing to forget men of genius when they cease to minister to their vanity or their pleasures, and are no longer the talk of the town. Reynolds was aware of this—no one had yet appeared capable of disputing with him the title of first portrait painter of the age; with this spell he had opened the doors as well as the purses of the proud and the far-descended, and taken his seat among the eminent of the land; and here he was resolved to remain.

In the year 1780 the Royal Academy was removed to Somerset House—rooms were prepared for the reception of the paintings—and models and apartments selected for the keeper and the secretary. Sir Joshua taxed his invention in the embellishment of the ceiling of the library, and could think of nothing better than Theory sitting on a cloud—a figure dark and mystical, which fails to explain its own meaning—nor is the meaning much to the purpose when it is explained. To the exhibition of this year he sent the portrait of Miss Beauclerc as Spenser's Una—and the heads of Gibbon the historian and Lady Beaumont. He also painted for the Royal Academy the portrait of Sir William Chambers, and that likeness of himself which contains the bust of Michael Angelo. It was one of the pleasant delusions of his life that the divinity of Michael Angelo inspired him in his productions—he was ever calling on his name—invoking him by his works—and making five guineas an hour in the belief that the severe majesty of Buonarotti was at least dimly seen among the curls and flounces, laced waistcoats, and well-powdered wigs of his English nobility.

He was questioned by Northcote on the merits of two French portraits, by Madame le Brun, which were then exhibited in London. "Pray what do you think of them, Sir Joshua?" Reynolds—"That they are very fine." Northcote—"How fine?" Reynolds—"As fine as those of any painter." Northcote—"As

fine as those of any painter!—do you mean living or dead?" Reynolds, sharply—"Either living or dead!" Northcote—"Good God! what, as fine as Vandyke?" Reynolds—"Yes, and finer." Reynolds had seen—as men see now—the wreck of high hopes and lofty expectations; he rated vulgar popularity at its worth, and disdained to interfere with the brief summer of Madame Le Brun.

A series of allegorical figures for the window of New College Chapel at Oxford employed his pencil during the year 1780, and for several succeeding years. There are seven personifications in all—Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance, Fortitude, Justice, and Prudence. That Reynolds has conferred a healthier hue and more splendid colors on those seven abstract personages than some of them enjoyed before, I readily allow; but they are a cold and unnatural progeny, and are regarded only as embellishments. Without nature there can be no sentiment—without flesh and blood there can be no sympathy. In the group of Charity a critic discovers that the "Fondling of the infant, the importunity of the boy, and the placid affection of the girl, together with the divided attention of the mother, are all distinguishably and judiciously marked with the knowledge of character for which the great artist who gave this design is so justly celebrated." This passage has surely been written to show how prettily words may be grouped together without meaning. Where is the *charity* in a mother taking charge of her own children?

The Nativity, a composition of thirteen figures, and in dimensions twelve feet by eighteen, was designed to surmount the Seven Allegories. This was sold to the Duke of Rutland for 1200 guineas, and was burnt at Belvoir Castle, with many other noble performances. It had the fault of almost all Sir Joshua's historical works; it was cold, labored, and uninspired. He had no revelations of heavenly things, such as descended on Raphael; the visions which presented themselves were unembodied or dim, and flitted before his sight like the shadowy progeny of Banquo. If angels of light, ministers of grace, and souls of just men made perfect could have sat for their portraits, who could have painted them so divinely as Reynolds?

Having painted a Thais with a torch in her hand, a death of Dido, and a Boy hearkening to a marvellous story, and placed them in the exhibition, he set off on a tour among the galleries of the continent. The fame of these three new pictures followed him. The Dido, by the loveliness of her face and the rich coloring of her robes, drew immense crowds to Somerset House. Meanwhile he pursued his journey. He stopped at Mechlin to see the celebrated altar-piece by Reubens, of which he was told the following story:—A citizen commissioned the picture, and Reubens, having made his sketch, employed Van Egmont, one of his scholars, to dead-color the canvass for the full-size painting. On this the citizen said to Reubens, "Sir, I bespoke a picture from the hand of the master, not from that of the scholar." "Content you, my friend," said the artist, "this is but a preliminary process, which I always intrust to other hands." "The citizen," said Sir Joshua, "was satisfied, and Reubens proceeded with the picture, which appears to me to have no indications of neglect in any part; on the contrary, I think it has been, for it is a little faded, one of his best pictures, though those who know this circumstance pretend to see Van Egmont's inferior genius through the touches of Reubens."

At Antwerp he noticed a young artist named De Gree, who had been designed for the church, but loved painting more, and pursued it with success. He came afterward to England. Reynolds generously gave him fifty guineas, which the young man, as pious as he was enthusiastic, transmitted home for the use of his aged parents.

When Reynolds returned to London he found that a new candidate for fame had made his appearance, and promised to become fashionable. This was Opie, who, introduced by Wolcot, and remarkable alike by the humility of his birth and the brightness of his talents, rose suddenly into reputation and employment. It is true that he had then but moderate skill, and that the works which the world of fashion applauded were his worst; but he was a peasant, and therefore a novelty; he could paint, and that was a wonder. So eager were the nobility and gentry to crowd into his gallery that their coaches became a nuisance; and the painter

jestingly said to one of his brethren, "I must plant cannon at my door to keep the multitude off." This fever soon reached its cold fit. But a little while—and not a coronetted equipage was to be seen in his street; and Opie said to the same friend, with sarcastic bitterness, "*They* have deserted my house as if it were infected with the plague." Sir Joshua, who knew the giddy nature of popular regard and the hollowness of patronage, regarded all this bustle with calmness; nor was he at all annoyed when the young peasant was employed by the chief nobility of England. He appreciated Opie's real talents, and, always willing to find a foreign forerunner for native genius, compared him to Carra-vaggio.

At the age of fifty-eight, and in the full enjoyment of health and vigor, Sir Joshua was attacked by a paralytic affection. His friends were more alarmed than himself; and Johnson, to whom at all times the idea of death was terrific, addressed him in a letter of solemn anxiety. "I heard yesterday," he says, "of your late disorder, and should think ill of myself if I heard it without alarm. I heard likewise of your recovery, which I wish to be complete and permanent. Your country has been in danger of losing one of its brightest ornaments, and I of losing one of my oldest and kindest friends; but I hope you will still live long for the honor of the nation; and that more enjoyment of your elegance, your intelligence, and your benevolence is still reserved for, dear sir, your most affectionate—SAM. JOHNSON." Reynolds soon recovered from this attack.

A sense of the excellence of his works, or acquaintance with his bounty, obtained for him the praise of Wolcot, more widely known by the name of Peter Pindar. In the dearth of good poets and manly satirists this person rose into reputation. His works had a wide circulation; and he was dreaded by all who had a reputation which would pay for an attack. His commendation, however, was about as undesirable as his satire. In his eulogiums on Reynolds, he calls on Reubens and Titian to awake, and see the new master sailing in supreme dominion, like the eagle of Jove, above the heads of all other mortals. Those two great artists are in no haste to arise to behold the elevation of a maker of por-

traits, and are insulted by the poet, and reproached with jealousy. Simple Portrait stands ready to be limned, and History sighs, anxious for his pencil. Such are the thoughts and many of the words in which Wolcot expressed his admiration of Reynolds. Nor was he much more successful when he condescended to treat of him in prose. "I lately breakfasted," he says, "with Sir Joshua, at his house in Leicester Fields. After some desultory remarks on the old masters, but not one word of the living artists—as on that subject no one can ever obtain his real opinion—the conversation turned on Dr. Johnson. On my asking him how the club to which he belonged could so patiently suffer the tyranny of this overbearing man, he replied with a smile, that the members often hazarded sentiments merely to try his powers in contradiction. I think I in some measure wounded the feelings of Reynolds by observing that I had often thought that the Ramblers were Idlers, and the Idlers Ramblers, except those papers which he (Reynolds) had contributed; and, farther, that Johnson too frequently acted the reverse of gipsies; the gipsies, said I, when they steal the children of gentlefolks, conceal the theft by beggarly disguises; whereas Johnson often steals common thoughts, disguising the theft by a pomp of language."

Sir Joshua, supreme head, as he was, of the academy, and unrivalled in fame and influence, was doomed to experience many crosses and vexations, but his sagacious spirit and tranquil temper brought him off triumphant. Barry, a man of great natural talents, and one who flew a flight even beyond Reynolds in his admiration of Michael Angelo, differed with him in every thing else. Becoming Professor of Painting on the resignation of Mr. Penny, he had it in his power to annoy the Chair, and was not slow in perceiving his advantage. Reynolds, in the performance of his duty as President, could not fail to remark how very backward the Professor of Painting was in the performance of his undertaking—he had not delivered the stipulated lectures—and he inquired if they were composed. Barry, a little man, and full of pride, rose on tiptoe—it is even said he clenched his fist to give stronger emphasis to his words—and exclaimed, "If I had only in composing my lectures to produce such poor mistaken stuff as your

discourses, I should have my work done, and be ready to read." To reply, suited neither the dignity nor the caution of Reynolds. The world praised him for his mildness and moderation, and censured his fiery opponent, on whom they laid the whole blame of this indecent and unusual scene.

The reformation which the Emperor of Germany wrought among the monastic establishments, brought before the public many of the productions of Reubens; and Reynolds, who seldom missed an opportunity of examining all paintings of eminence, went over to the Netherlands to see them. He remarked, on his return from his first tour that his own works were deficient in force in comparison to those he had seen; and on his second tour, "He observed to me," said Sir George Beaumont, "that the pictures of Reubens appeared much less brilliant than they had done on the former inspection. He could not for some time account for this circumstance; but when he recollected that when he first saw them he had his note-book in his hand for the purpose of writing down short remarks, he perceived what had occasioned their now making a less impression than they had done formerly. By the eye passing immediately from the white paper to the picture, the colors derived uncommon richness and warmth; for want of this foil, they afterward appeared comparatively cold."

Mason, after having translated Du Fresnoy's Art of Painting, laid it aside, and had nearly forgotten it when it was brought into light and life by the inquiries and commendations and illustrative notes of Sir Joshua. He seems to have been desirous at all times of obtaining literary distinction for himself; or at least of obtaining the regard of literary men. It is true that some of his admirers claim the highest honors of literature for his Discourses, which Malone, inspired by his friendship and his legacy, calls "The Golden Discourses." Others, like Wolcott, see an excellence in his casual essays which those of Johnson never attained; nor is Northcote willing to be behind, for, instead of Burke lending his aid to Reynolds in the composition of those far-famed Discourses, he reverses the obligation, and insinuates that Burke had the help of Sir Joshua in writing his admirable admonition to

Barry. To claims such as these it would be unwise to listen. Johnson and Burke were of a higher order of intellect than Reynolds, and displayed a mastery in every subject with which they grappled. Such men were much more likely to impart than receive aid from him in literary compositions; and there is nothing in the letter of Burke which required minute information, or a mechanical acquaintance with the details of art. It discusses principles, not practice, and may justly claim the honor of being the most clear, sagacious, profound, and natural view of the true objects of painting which has ever been composed.

The notes which Reynolds added to Du Fresnoy may be dismissed in a few words. They are distinguished by their sagacity and knowledge—by their shrewd estimates of other men's merits, and by their modesty concerning his own. I have said that the President was frugal in his communications respecting the sources from whence he drew his own practice—he forgets his caution in one of these notes. He is speaking of the masters of the Venetian school, and says:—"When I was at Venice the method I took to avail myself of their principles was this: When I observed an extraordinary effect of light and shade in any picture, I took a leaf out of my pocket-book, and darkened every part of it in the same gradation of light and shade as the picture, leaving the white paper untouched to represent the light, and this without any attention to the subject or the drawing of the figures. A few trials of this kind will be sufficient to give the method of their conduct in the management of their lights. After a few experiments, I found the paper blotted nearly alike; their general practice appeared to be, to allow not above a quarter of the picture for the light, including in this portion both the principal and secondary lights; another quarter to be kept as dark as possible; and the remaining half kept in mezzotint, or half-shadow. Reubens appears to have admitted rather more light than a quarter, and Rembrandt much less, scarce an eighth; by this conduct Rembrandt's light is extremely brilliant—but it costs too much—the rest of the picture is sacrificed to this one object. That light will certainly appear the brightest which is surrounded with the greatest quantity of shade, supposing equal skill in the artist."

Reynolds was commonly humane and tolerant; he could indeed afford, both in fame and in purse, to commend and aid the timid and the needy. When Gainsborough asked sixty guineas for his *Girl and Pigs*, Sir Joshua gave him a hundred; and when another English artist of celebrity, on his arrival from Rome, asked him where he should set up a studio, he informed him that the next house to his own was vacant, and at his service. He could, however, be sharp and bitter on occasion. It is one of the penalties paid for eminence to be obliged, as a matter of courtesy, to give opinions upon the attempts of the dull. Sir Joshua had such visitations in abundance. One morning he became wearied in contemplating a succession of specimens submitted to his inspection, and, fixing his eye on a female portrait by a young and trembling practitioner, he roughly exclaimed: "What's this in your hand? A portrait! you should not show such things. What's that upon her head—a dish-clout?" The student retired in sorrow, and did not touch his pencils for a month.

Allan Ramsay, the King's painter, died in 1784, and was succeeded in his office by Reynolds—the emolument was little, nor was the honor important. Wilkes, in his sarcastic attack upon Hogarth, confounds the station with that of the house painter; in short, the place, having been filled by several inferior artists, had sunk into discredit, like that of city poet. The exertions of Burke in reforming the expenses of the royal household had reduced the salary of the king's painter from two hundred pounds to fifty; and as Reynolds had no use for the money, and as the station could confer no new dignity upon him, he could have had no inducement to take it, save the desire of complying with the wishes of his benevolent sovereign.

He distinguished himself above all his brother artists this year by his *Fortune Teller*, his portrait of Miss Kemble, and his *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*—all very noble compositions. The latter conveys a strong image of the great actress, as in the fullness of her beauty and her genius, she awed and astonished her audience, making Old Drury to show "a slope of wet faces from the pit to the roof." It is, indeed, only a portrait—though Barry, in one of his kindly moods, claims for it a distinction higher than

that arising from resemblance; but a portrait of Mrs. Siddons was enough. When fully possessed with the muse, I never beheld a human being, either in the imaginings of art or in living life, that seemed so near akin to divinity. The artist valued this magnificent painting at a thousand guineas—it is in the gallery of William Smith, Esq., of Norwich.

Amid the applause which these works obtained for him, the President met with a loss which the world could not repair—Samuel Johnson died on the 13th of December, 1784, full of years and honors. A long, a warm, and a beneficial friendship had subsisted between them. The house and the purse of Reynolds were ever open to Johnson, and the word and the pen of Johnson were equally ready for Reynolds. It was pleasing to contemplate this affectionate brotherhood, and it was sorrowful to see it dissevered. “I have three requests to make,” said Johnson, a day before his death, “and I beg that you will attend to them, Sir Joshua. Forgive me thirty pounds which I borrowed from you—read the Scriptures—and abstain from using your pencil on the Sabbath-day.” Reynolds promised, and, what is better, remembered his promise.

We owe the discovery of an original picture of Milton to the sagacity of Reynolds. It had belonged to Deborah, the poet's daughter; had passed into the family of Sir William Davenant; and was found in the possession of a furniture-broker by a dealer in pictures, who sold it to Sir Joshua for a hundred guineas. It was painted by Samuel Cooper, the friend and companion of Milton, in 1653. Doubts were raised, and suspicions expressed concerning the descent of this portrait, and it must be confessed that all such discoveries deserve to be inquired into by men acquainted with the frauds practised in art. The professional experience of Sir Joshua was the best security against imposition. He was satisfied of its authenticity, and defended it successfully in the *Gentlemen's Magazine*.

The works of Reynolds had long supplied daily food for those critics who swarm in the land—and scatter censure or praise at least as blindly as Fortune. He was now to be exposed to another of the same class, equally insidious and subtle, and coming in a

graver shape—a biographer. With so little skill, however, did this literary undertaker make his approaches, that he at first impressed the artist with a notion that his purpose was not to write his life, but to take it. Now Sir Joshua had long indulged in the pleasing delusion that Malone, or Boswell, or Beattie, or Burke, on all of whom he had showered favors, would perform in due time this friendly office. To them he had opened up all his knowledge, and for their use he had made memorandums concerning his practice, all calculated to direct the pen and shorten the labor of the biographer. But his chief dependence for his biography was on Burke, whose talents he rated even above those of Johnson, and whose service he sought to secure by a donation of four thousand pounds. The best laid schemes of mice and men, says the poetical moralist, are often frustrated; and so it happened here. Sir Joshua refused the humble in hopes of the high. When his pencil could no longer please, nor his pen sign away the thousands in his purse, he was neglected or forgotten by persons who had followed and flattered him.

Two pictures, differing much in character, yet of great merit, came from his pencil during the year 1785. One was *Love unloosing the zone of Beauty*—a work which I can not hope to describe in the language of discretion, and the other was the portrait of the Duke of Orleans, infamous under the name of *Egalite*, of whom I can not write with temperance.

During the following year, he gave up his thoughts and time to a picture, commissioned by Catharine of Russia, and after long choosing, selected a subject at once common-place and obscure—*The Infant Hercules strangling the Serpents*. He had imagined another and a nobler composition, Elizabeth visiting the English Camp at Tilbury, when the Armada was on the sea; but he relinquished the idea, from a wish to paint something illustrative of the character and undertakings of the empress herself. Now Catharine was a woman who loved nature, and had no taste for allegorical subtleties; and it is probable her Russian connoisseurs never imagined that her actions were shadowed forth in a chubby boy choking two snakes. She rewarded the President, however, with fifteen hundred guineas and a gold box, bearing her portrait

set in large diamonds. Beattie calls it an unpromising subject; Barry commends the light and shade, and Reynolds himself, on bidding it farewell, said, "there are ten pictures under it, some better, some worse." So many trials had he made, such had been his anxiety to produce a masterpiece. The same year he painted a more simple and more popular picture—a sleeping girl. So splendid were the colors in which this sleeping beauty was embodied, that they threw into shade all other works which were near it in the exhibition.

When Boydell, a name which all lovers of art have learned to reverence, projected an edition of Shakspeare, embellished with engravings from the ablest painters, he found Reynolds unexpectedly cold and backward. A sensible friend undertook the task of persuasion, and in the midst of his arguments slipped a five hundred pound note into the artist's hand. This mode of reasoning was persuasive; three pictures were promised, imagined, sketched, and painted. The first was Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, a singular and a happy production, the very image of that tricky sprite, with a hand ready for pleasant mischief, and an eye shining with uncommitted roguery. This poetic picture is in a poet's keeping—that of Mr. Rogers. The second was Macbeth, with the witches and the caldron. The figure of the usurper is deficient in heroic dignity; but there is a supernatural splendor thrown over the hags which can not be contemplated without awe. The vivid excellence of Shakspeare, however, prevails against the painter; the conception is below the execution. The third and last was the death of Cardinal Beaufort, a work which has received the highest praise and the deepest censure. I can not help regarding the conception as a failure. To augment the horrors of a guilty conscience, the artist has introduced a fiend, who posts himself at the dying man's head, and excites our disgust, and carries away our feelings from the departing sinner. Those who seek a justification of this in the poet will seek in vain; the lines quoted in its defence contain only a figure of speech; one of those bold figures in which the great dramatist loved to deal.

"O thou eternal mover of the heavens,
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!

Oh, beat away the busy meddling fiend
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
And from his bosom purge this black despair."

Those who are unconvinced by these words may look for the fiend of the artist in the dramatic personæ of the poet. Opie praises this hideous and shapeless supernumerary as "one of the most signal examples of invention in the artist." The artist received a thousand guineas for Macbeth, and five hundred for Cardinal Beaufort. He took commissions of this kind with reluctance; his imagination was not a teeming one; he had numerous trials to make; success was never certain; and when he had finished his work, he found that the dead were but indifferent patrons; he complained, in short, says Northcote, that those subjects "cost him too dear."

Of his portrait of Elliot, Lord Heathfield, Barry says, "His object appears to have been to obtain the vigor and solidity of Titian, and the bustle and spirit of Vandyke, without the excesses of either." It is a noble and heroic head. There is a calm, martial determination, which corresponds with the rough aspect. He grasps the key of Gibraltar in his hand, and seems to say, amid the volleying smoke and fire, "This rock shall melt and run into the Mediterranean before I yield thee."

Reynolds once observed that it was impossible for two painters in the same line of art to live in friendship. This was probably uttered in a moment of peevishness, when he had been thwarted by some brother of the calling, and was not intended for a deliberate opinion. It is, nevertheless, nearer the truth than the disciples of art are willing to admit. What is the secret history of the Royal Academy but a record of battles and bickerings, of petty disputes and trifling animosities? Hogarth lived before it was founded an object of mingled envy and terror. Gainsborough disliked Reynolds, Reynolds had no good will to Gainsborough; Wilson also shared in this unamiable feeling, and Barry was unwilling to forgive any one who painted better than himself. These are masters and princes of the calling; their open feuds and private warrings would fill a volume; the animosities of the lesser spirits are unworthy of notice.

Sir Joshua sat to Gainsborough for his portrait; before it was finished, he was taken ill and went to Bath; of his recovery and return he gave intimation; but no notice was taken of it, and the picture was never finished. Some unnatural fit of good will had brought them together—on reflection they separated, and continued to speak of one another after their own natures; Gainsborough with open scorn, Reynolds with courteous, cautious insinuation. It is true, however, that they at length forgave each other—that Gainsborough on his *death-bed* made atonement for his opposition and relinquished all dislike—and that of Gainsborough, after he was fairly in his grave, Reynolds spoke with truth and justice.

The President was persuaded about this time by Boswell to attend the execution of a robber at Newgate. The unfortunate sufferer had been a servant in the family of Thrale, had often stood behind Sir Joshua's back, and on seeing him in the crowd, bowed to him with mournful civility. A hero dying in battle, or a saint in his bed, may be worthy of contemplation; but what a Reynolds could have looked for, except disgust and sickness of heart, in witnessing the mortal agony of a vulgar malefactor, I am at a loss to conceive. He was sharply admonished at the time in some of the journals.

Sir Joshua had now reached his sixty-sixth year; the boldness and happy freedom of his productions was undiminished; and the celerity of his execution and the glowing richness of his coloring, were rather on the increase than the wane. His life had been uniformly virtuous and temperate; and his looks, notwithstanding the paralytic stroke he had lately received, promised health and long life. He was happy in his fame and fortune, and in the society of numerous and eminent friends; and he saw himself in his old age without a rival. His great prudence and fortunate control of temper had prevented him from giving serious offence to any individual; and the money he had amassed, and the style in which he lived, unencumbered with a family, created a respect for him among those who were incapable of understanding his merits. But the hour of sorrow was at hand. One day, in the month of July, 1789, while finishing the portrait of the Mar-

chioness of Hertford, he felt a sudden decay of sight in his left eye. He laid down the pencil; sat a little while in mute consideration, and never lifted it more.

His sight gradually darkened, and within ten weeks of the first attack, his left eye was wholly blind. He appeared cheerful, and endeavored to persuade himself that he was resigned and happy. But he had been accustomed to the society of the titled and the beautiful—and from this he was now cut off; he knew the world well, and perceived that, as the pencil, which brought the children of vanity about him as with a charm, could no longer be used, the giddy tide of approbation would soon roll another way. His mental sufferings were visible to some of his friends, though he sought to conceal them with all his might. One read to him to charm away the time—another conversed with him—and the social circle, among whom he had so long presided, still assembled round the well-spread table. Ozias Humphreys came every morning and read a newspaper to him; his niece, afterward Marchioness of Thomond, arrived from the country and endeavored to soothe and amuse him; and he tried to divert himself by changing the position of his pictures, and by exhibiting them all in succession in his drawing-room, so that he at once pleased his friends and gratified himself.

But a man can not always live in society, nor can society always spare time to amuse him; there are many hours of existence which he must gladden, as he can, for himself. Cowper took to the taming of hares; and Sir Joshua made a companion of a little bird, which was so tame and docile as to perch on his hand; and with this innocent favorite he was often found by his friends pacing around his room, and speaking to it as if it were a thing of sense and information. A summer morning and an open window were temptations which it could not resist; it flew away; and Reynolds roamed for hours about the square where he resided, in hopes of reclaiming it.

His rest was invaded by other disturbers than blindness: the evil spirit of politics appeared in the Literary Club, and made discord among the brethren; and, what was worse, a fierce feud broke out between Sir Joshua and the Royal Academy. Reynolds

wished, through the persuasion of the Earl of Aylesford to obtain the chair of perspective for Bonomi, an Italian architect; but as he did not belong to the Academy, it was necessary that he should be elected an associate, and then a member, before he could be proposed as a professor. At the election for *associate* the numbers were equal for Bonomi and Gilpin; the President gave his casting vote for the former, and thus put him one step in the way towards the professor's chair. A member soon after died, and the architect was put in nomination along with Fuseli. Reynolds exerted all his influence to secure the election of the first as royal academician; he met with unexpected opposition. His zeal in behalf of Bonomi had been too apparent; he had pushed him by his influence faster forward than some thought his talents entitled him to, and had transgressed a formal rule by producing some drawings made by the Italian. Fuseli was elected by a majority of two to one, and Sir Joshua quitted the chair deeply offended. Nor was this all; he wrote a warm, indignant letter, resigning his station as President, and bidding a final farewell to the Academy; he thought a little—and burned it—and then wrote a cold and courteous one to the same effect. The Academy were overwhelmed with consternation, and endeavored to soothe his pride by submissions little short of prostration. Sir William Chambers was the bearer, too, of a royal wish, saying how happy his majesty would be if Sir Joshua would continue President. Thus assailed, he relented, and resumed the seat which his good sense should have prevented him from vacating.

He resumed it, however, only to resign it, which he performed in kindness, not in anger, after an occupation of twenty-one years. During all that period he had continued absolute in the realms of art, and maintained the dignity of his profession both in the Academy and in society. He had encountered indeed the rough hostility of Barry, and the opposition of Gainsborough; but these were transient and ineffectual, and save these and some uncivil bickerings respecting twopenny-halfpenny plans of economy, his reign had been one of prosperity and peace. The other thirty-nine members, indeed, seem to have regarded him with a degree of submission amounting to servile fear; and, generally speaking,

in the little senate of the Academy he had all his time sat sole dictator.

The last time that Reynolds made his appearance in the Academy was in the year 1790; he addressed a speech to the students on the delivery of the medals, and concluded by expatiating upon the genius of his favorite master, in such words as a credulous Catholic may use in praise of a benevolent saint. "I feel," said he, "a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect, not without vanity, that these discourses bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man; and I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce in this Academy, and from this place, might be the name of Michael Angelo."

His last visit to the Academy seemed once on the point of ending tragically. There were present, besides members and students, a number of persons of rank and importance. The multitude was large, the weight great, and just as the President was commencing his discourse, a beam in the floor gave way with a loud crash. The audience rushed to the door, or to the sides of the room; lord tumbled over student, student over lord, and academicians over both. Sir Joshua sat silent and unmoved in his chair; and as the floor only sunk a little, it was soon supported—the company resumed their seats—and he recommenced his discourse, all with perfect composure. He afterward remarked, that if the floor had fallen, the whole company must have been killed, and the arts in Britain thrown two hundred years back in consequence. He considered art as an inheritance descending from father to son; he believed that each succeeding generation would grow wiser and better, and that future academicians had only to add the knowledge of the dead to the genius of the living, and rise higher and higher; painting history till it became divine, and portraits worthy of the gods. That this wild notion was fixed within him there can be no dispute. "So much will painting improve," said he, "that the best we can now achieve will appear like the work of children."

That examples of excellence in art might not be wanting, Sir Joshua offered to the Royal Academy his valuable collection of

pictures by the great masters, at a very low price, on the condition that they should purchase a good gallery for their reception. It was his fortune to meet with many mortifications towards the close of his career, and this was one; the Academy, with a parsimony which is left unexplained, declined the purchase. They could not want money—for the President knew their circumstances; but they wanted a proper enthusiasm for art. Among forty men some two or three sordid souls are sure to be mixed, whose chief delight is the accumulation of money; who damp a generous enthusiasm by their parsimonious calculations, and delight in tying up the public gains of an institution at a satisfactory per-centage. Disappointed in this, Sir Joshua made an exhibition of them in the Haymarket, for the advantage of his faithful servant, Ralph Kirkley; but our painter's well known love of gain excited public suspicion; he was considered by many as a partaker in the profits, and reproached by the application of two lines from Hudibras—

“A squire he had whose name was Ralph,
Who in the adventure went his half.”

But he was soon to be removed from the ingratitude of friends and the malevolence of enemies. He had been on a visit to Mr. Burke in Buckinghamshire. On his return, he alighted at the inn at Hayes, and walked five miles on the road, in company with Mr. Malone, without stopping, and without complaint. He had then, though sixty-eight years old, the looks of a man of fifty, and seemed, said Malone, as likely to live ten or fifteen years as any of his younger friends. Soon after his return home his spirits became much depressed; a tumor, which baffled the skill of the surgeons, began to gather over his left eye, and, feeling the oppression of infirmities, he at length resigned for ever the situation of President of the Royal Academy.

A concealed and fatal malady was invading the functions of life, and sapping his spirits. This was an enlargement of the liver, which expanded to twice its natural dimensions, defied human skill, and deprived him of all cheerfulness. His friends were ever with him, and sought to soothe him with hopes of re-

covery and with visions of long life; but he felt, in the simple language of the old bard,

"That death was with him dealing,"

refused to be comforted, and prepared for dissolution. "I have been fortunate," he said, "in long good health and constant success, and I ought not to complain. I know that all things on earth must have an end, and now I am come to mine." Sir Joshua expired, without any visible symptoms of pain, on the twenty-third of February, 1792, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

"His illness," says Burke, "was long, but borne with a mild and cheerful fortitude, without the least mixture of any thing irritable or querulous; agreeably to the placid and even tenor of his whole life. He had, from the beginning of his malady, a distinct view of his dissolution; and he contemplated it with that entire composure, which nothing but the innocence, integrity, and usefulness of his life, and an unaffected submission to the will of Providence, could bestow."

He was interred in one of the crypts of St. Paul's cathedral, and accompanied to the grave by many of the most illustrious men of the land—forty-two coaches conveyed the mourners, and forty-nine empty carriages of the nobility and gentry added their encumbrance to the procession. He lies by the side of Sir Christopher Wren, architect of the edifice; and a statue to his memory by Flaxman has since been placed in the body of the cathedral.

In stature Sir Joshua Reynolds was somewhat below the middle size; his complexion was florid, his features blunt and round, his aspect lively and intelligent, and his manners calm, simple, and unassuming. He was an early mover—a man whom application could not tire, nor constant labor subdue. In his economy he was close and saving; while he poured out his wines, and spread out his tables to the titled or the learned, he stinted his domestics to the commonest fare, and rewarded their faithfulness by very moderate wages. One of his servants, who survived till lately, described him as a master who exacted obedience in trifles, was prudent in the matter of pins—a saver of bits of thread—a man hard and parsimonious, who never thought he had enough of labor out of his dependents, and always suspected that he

overpaid them. To this may be added the public opinion, which pictured him close, cold, cautious, and sordid; and—on the other side, we have the open testimony of Burke, Malone, Boswell, and Johnson, who all represent him as generous, open-hearted, and humane. The servants and the friends both spoke, I doubt not, according to their own experience of the man. Privations in early life rendered strict economy necessary; and in spite of many acts of kindness, his mind on the whole failed to expand with his fortune; he continued the same system of saving when he was master of sixty thousand pounds, as when he owned but sixpence. He loved reputation dearly, and it would have been well for his fame, if, over and above leaving legacies to such friends as Burke and Malone, he had opened his heart to humbler people. A little would have gone a long way—a kindly word and a guinea prudently given!

Sir Joshua has a threefold claim upon posterity—for his Discourses, his historical and poetical paintings, and his portraits. Of all these I have already spoken at some length. The Discourses were delivered when the annual distribution of medals took place among the most promising students of the Royal Academy. Their object was to impress upon the minds of his audience a sense of the dignity, and a knowledge of the character and importance of art—to stimulate them to study and labor—to point out the way to excellence; unfold the principles of composition, and disclose the charms of beauty and the whole mystery of color. He required lively diligence—continued study and unlimited belief in the excellence of the chief masters of the calling—in reward for which he promised distinction and fame. But fame could be acquired only by study, hard, and, above all, well-directed—rules were the ornaments, not the fetters, of genius, and hard labor was the way to eminence, and the only way. The great painters, when they conceived a subject, first made a variety of sketches, then a finished drawing of the whole—after that a more correct drawing of every separate part—then they painted the picture, and after all retouched it from the life. The pictures thus wrought with such pains, appeared to be the effect of enchantment, and as if some mighty genius had struck them off at

a blow. Those Discourses were always heard with respect; and as the subject was new, the compositions full of knowledge, and the illustrations numerous and happy, they obtained the approbation of skilful judges, and rose to such reputation, that they were attributed at one time to Johnson, and at another to Burke.

They are distinguished by many beauties, and deformed by one serious fault—they correspond not with the character of English art, and the determined taste of this country. "Study," exclaimed Reynolds to his students (and I could quote fifty pages to the same purpose,) "study the great works of the great masters for ever. Study as nearly as you can in the order, in the manner, on the principles on which they studied. Study nature attentively, but always with those masters in your company; consider them as models which you are to imitate, and at the same time as rivals which you are to combat." Such was his theory; we all know what was his practice. He could not be unaware, while he was lecturing the annual academical crop of beardless youths upon the necessity of studying in the character, and laboring in the style of the princes of the Italian school, that he was sending them forth to seek bread and fame in a pursuit where neither were to be found; while he was shutting his lips, and keeping silence concerning the domestic style and the mystery of portraiture, in which he himself was unequalled.

It was, I apprehend, too, the province of the President to point out those natural qualities by which genius for art might be distinguished from forwardness and presumption, and young men might see whether they were led by the false light of vanity or by light from heaven. Every dunce can labor; but stupidity must toil like Caliban, while genius works its ready wonders like the wand of Prospero. It was not enough that he called the students before him, and set them their stated tasks of smoothing clay or of coloring canvass—he ought to have admonished, nay, commanded the dull and unintellectual to retire from a pursuit for which they were unfit. All men indeed are capable of being artists in a certain degree, as all men may be versifiers; but a decent drawing is no more a proof of genius in art, than a few smooth and sounding lines are a proof of the spirit of poetry. The youth who

is to be encouraged in the pursuit of poetry should show glimpses of original power of thought and ready happiness of language; and a student in art should display some production of original and unborrowed talent, before admission to the Academy. A good eye, a steady hand, and a little practice may enable any young man to make such a copy of an antique figure as will give him admission, without genius to rise one step higher.

Sir Joshua's historical paintings have little of the heroic dignity which an inspired mind breathes into compositions of that class. His imagination commonly fails him, and he attempts to hide his want of wings in the unrivalled splendor of his coloring, and by the thick-strewn graces of his execution. He is often defective even where he might have expected to show the highest excellence; his faces are formal and cold; and the picture seems made up of borrowed fragments, which he had been unable to work up into an entire and consistent whole.

His single poetic figures are remarkable for their unaffected ease, their elegant simplicity, and the splendor of their coloring. Some scores of those happy things he dashed off in the course of his life, and though they were chiefly portraits, they have all the charm of the most successful aerial creations. The Shepherd Boy is one of his happiest. Of children he seems to have been remarkably fond; nor can one forbear imagining that he has romped or ridden with them on the parlor broom, sorrowed with them over the loss of their favorite birds, smiled with them on their being endowed with new finery, and enjoyed all the mixed surprise and triumph expressed in the face of *Muscipula* on catching a mouse in a trap. It is true that they are all children of condition, with their nurses wet and dry—that their clothes are of the finest texture and the latest fashion—and that we are conscious of looking at future lords and ladies. But nature overpowers all minor feelings, and we can not refrain from doing involuntary homage to the genius of the painter who has gladdened us with the sight of so much innocence and beauty.

To some of his poetic figures I can not afford such praise, though the grace of their composition and the singular sweetness of their looks raise them far above censure. By what he consid-

ered a classical refinement upon his professional flattery of improved looks and glowing colors, he suffered some of the fairest of his sitters to be goddesses and nymphs, and painted them in character. This was the common-place pedantry of painting; it had been the fashion for centuries. Lely and Kneller caused the giddy madams of the courts of the Stuarts to stalk like Minervas or Junos, though they had naturally the dispositions of Venus or Danae; and Reynolds, who had equal loveliness and infinitely more purity to portray, indulged his beauties with the same kind of deification. In truth, it is only worthy of a smile.

The portraits of Reynolds are equally numerous and excellent, and all who have written of their merits have swelled their eulogiums by comparing them with the simplicity of Titian, the vigor of Rembrandt, and the elegance and delicacy of Vandyke. Certainly, in character and expression, and in manly ease, he has never been surpassed. He is always equal—always natural—graceful—unaffected. His boldness of posture and his singular freedom of coloring are so supported by all the grace of art—by all the sorcery of skill—that they appear natural and noble. Over the meanest head he sheds the halo of dignity; his men are all nobleness, his women all loveliness, and his children all simplicity; yet they are all like the living originals. He had the singular art of summoning the mind into the face, and making sentiment mingle in the portrait. He could completely dismiss all his preconceived notions of academic beauty from his mind, be dead to the past and living only to the present, and enter into the character of the reigning beauty of the hour with a truth and a happiness next to magical. It is not to be denied that he was a mighty flatterer. Had Colonel Charteris sat to Reynolds, he would, I doubt not, have given an aspect worthy of a President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

That the admirers of portrait painting are many, the annual exhibitions show us; and it is pleasant to read the social and domestic affections of the country in these innumerable productions. In the minds of some they rank with historical compositions; and there can be no doubt that portraits which give the form and the soul of poets and statesmen and warriors, and of all whose actions

or whose thoughts lend lustre to the land, are to be received as illustrations of history. But with the mob of portraits fame and history have nothing to do. The painter who wishes for lasting fame must not lavish his fine colors and his choice postures on the rich and the titled alone; he must seek to associate his labors with the genius of his country. The face of an undistinguished person, however exquisitely painted, is disregarded in the eyes of posterity. The most skilful posture and the richest coloring can not create the reputation which accompanies genius, and we turn coldly away from the head which we happen not to know or to have heard of. The portrait of Johnson has risen to the value of five hundred guineas; while the heads of many of Sir Joshua's grandest lords remain at their original fifty.

The influence of Reynolds on the taste and elegance of the island was great, and will be lasting. The grace and ease of his compositions were a lesson for the living to study, while the simplicity of his dresses admonished the giddy and the gay against the hideousness of fashion. He sought to restore nature in the looks of his sitters, and he waged a thirty years' war against the fopperies of dress. His works diffused a love of elegance, and united with poetry in softening the asperities of nature, in extending our views, and in connecting us with the spirits of the time. His cold stateliness of character, and his honorable pride of art, gave dignity to his profession; the rich and the far-descended were pleased to be painted by a gentleman as well as a genius.

Of historical and poetic subjects he painted upwards of one hundred and thirty. They are chiefly in England, and in the galleries or chambers of the titled and the opulent. The names of a few of the most famous may interest the reader: Macbeth and the Witches; Cardinal Beaufort; Holy Family; Hercules strangling the Serpents; the Nativity; Count Ugolino; Cymon and Iphigenia; the Fortune Teller; Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy; the Snake in the Grass; the Blackguard Mercury; Muscipula; Puck; Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse; the Shepherd Boy; Venus ehiding Cupid for casting accounts.

Of men he painted the portraits of some four-and-twenty,

whose names still occupy their station in fame or history; and of ladies he painted many remarkable for accomplishments, mental and personal. Among the former, are Percy, Bishop of Dromore; Edmund Burke; Colonel Tarleton; Dr. Charles Burney; Dr. Hawkesworth; Dr. Robertson; Joseph Warton; Earl of Mansfield; Edward Gibbon; Oliver Goldsmith; Samuel Johnson; Warren Hastings; Lord Anson; Lord Heathfield; Lord Ligonier; Lord Rodney; Lord Thurlow; Lord Granby; Thomas Warton; Adam Ferguson; Sir Joseph Banks; Sir William Chambers; Laurence Sterne; Dr. Beattie; Viscount Keppel; Horace Walpole; and Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Let me conclude with the words of Burke. They are a little loftier than necessary, and somewhat warmer; but much less can not be said when a colder tale comes to be told.

“Sir Joshua Reynolds was, on many accounts, one of the most memorable men of his time. He was the first Englishman who added the praise of the elegant arts to the other glories of his country. In taste—in grace—in facility—in happy invention—and in the richness and harmony of coloring, he was equal to the greatest masters of the renowned ages. In portrait he went beyond them; for he communicated to that description of the art in which English artists are most engaged, a variety, a fancy, and a dignity derived from the higher branches, which even those who professed them in a superior manner, did not always preserve when they delineated individual nature. His portraits remind the spectator of the invention and the amenity of landscape. In painting portraits he appeared not to be raised upon that platform, but to descend upon it from a higher sphere.

“In full affluence of foreign and domestic fame, admired by the expert in art and by the learned in science, courted by the great, caressed by sovereign powers, and celebrated by distinguished poets, his native humility, modesty, and candor never forsook him, even on surprise or provocation; nor was the least degree of arrogance or assumption visible to the most scrutinizing eye in any part of his conduct or discourse.

“His talents of every kind, powerful by nature and not meanly cultivated by letters—his social virtues in all the relations

and all the habitudes of life, rendered him the centre of a very great and unparalleled variety of agreeable societies, which will be dissipated by his death. He had too much merit not to excite some jealousy—too much innocence to provoke any enmity. The loss of no man of his time can be felt with more sincere, general, and unmixed sorrow. Hail! and Farewell.”

DISCOURSES.

TO
THE KING.

THE regular progress of cultivated life is from necessities to accommodations, from accommodations to ornaments. By your illustrious predecessors were established Marts for manufactures, and Colleges for science: but for the arts of elegance, those arts by which manufactures are embellished, and science is refined, to found an Academy was reserved for Your Majesty.

Had such patronage been without effect, there had been reason to believe that Nature had, by some insurmountable impediment, obstructed our proficiency; but the annual improvement of the Exhibitions which Your Majesty has been pleased to encourage, shows that only encouragement had been wanting.

To give advice to those who are contending for royal liberality, has been for some years the duty of my station in the Academy; and these discourses hope for Your Majesty's acceptance, as well intended endeavors to incite that emulation which your notice has kindled, and direct those studies which your bounty has rewarded.

May it please Your Majesty,

Your Majesty's

Most dutiful Servant,

And most faithful Subject,

JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

[1778.]

TO
THE MEMBERS
OF
THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

GENTLEMEN,

THAT you have ordered the publication of this discourse, is not only very flattering to me, as it implies your approbation of the method of study which I have recommended; but likewise, as this method receives from that act such an additional weight and authority, as demands from the Students that deference and respect, which can be due only to the united sense of so considerable a BODY of ARTISTS.

I am, with the greatest esteem and respect,

Gentlemen,

Your most humble,

And obedient Servant,

JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

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DISCOURSE I.

Delivered at the Opening of the Royal Academy, January 2, 1769.

The advantages proceeding from the institution of a Royal Academy.—Hints offered to the consideration of the Professors and Visitors.—That an implicit obedience to the rules of Art be exacted from the young students.—That a premature disposition to a masterly dexterity be repressed.—That diligence be constantly recommended, and (that it may be effectual) directed to its proper object.

GENTLEMEN,

AN Academy, in which the Polite Arts may be regularly cultivated, is at last opened among us by Royal Munificence. This must appear an event in the highest degree interesting, not only to the Artist, but to the whole nation.

It is indeed difficult to give any other reason, why an empire like that of BRITAIN should so long have wanted an ornament so suitable to its greatness, than that slow progression of things, which naturally makes elegance and refinement the last effect of opulence and power.

An Institution like this has often been recommended upon considerations merely mercantile; but an Academy, founded upon such principles, can never effect even its own narrow purposes. If it has an origin no higher, no taste can ever be formed in manufactures; but if the higher Arts of Design flourish, these inferior ends will be answered of course.

We are happy in having a Prince, who has conceived the design of such an Institution, according to its true dignity; and who promotes the Arts, as the head of a great, a

learned, a polite, and a commercial nation ; and I can now congratulate you, gentlemen, on the accomplishment of your long and ardent wishes.

The numberless and ineffectual consultations which I have had with many in this assembly to form plans and concert schemes for an Academy, afford a sufficient proof of the impossibility of succeeding but by the influence of MAJESTY. But there have, perhaps, been times, when even the influence of MAJESTY would have been ineffectual ; and it is pleasing to reflect, that we are thus embodied, when every circumstance seems to concur from which honor and prosperity can probably arise.

There are, at this time, a greater number of excellent artists than were ever known before at one period in this nation ; there is a general desire among our Nobility to be distinguished as lovers and judges of the Arts ; there is a greater superfluity of wealth among the people to reward the professors ; and, above all, we are patronised by a Monarch, who, knowing the value of science and of elegance, thinks every art worthy of his notice, that tends to soften and humanise the mind.

After so much has been done by HIS MAJESTY, it will be wholly our fault, if our progress is not in some degree correspondent to the wisdom and generosity of the Institution : let us show our gratitude in our diligence, that, though our merit may not answer his expectations, yet, at least, our industry may deserve his protection.

But whatever may be our proportion of success, of this we may be sure, that the present Institution will at least contribute to advance our knowledge of the Arts, and bring us nearer to that ideal excellence, which it is the lot of genius always to contemplate, and never to attain.

The principal advantage of an Academy is, that, besides furnishing able men to direct the Student, it will be a repository for the great examples of the Art. These are the materials on which Genius is to work, and without which the strongest intellect may be fruitlessly or deviously employed. By studying these authentic models, that idea of excellence which is the result of the accumulated experience of past ages may be at once acquired; and the tardy and obstructed progress of our predecessors may teach us a shorter and easier way. The Student receives, at one glance, the principles which many Artists have spent their whole lives in ascertaining; and, satisfied with their effect, is spared the painful investigation by which they came to be known and fixed. How many men of great natural abilities have been lost to this nation, for want of these advantages! They never had an opportunity of seeing those masterly efforts of genius, which at once kindle the whole soul, and force it into sudden and irresistible approbation.

Raffaële, it is true, had not the advantage of studying in an Academy; but all Rome, and the works of Michael Angelo in particular, were to him an Academy. On the sight of the Capella Sistina, he immediately, from a dry, Gothic, and even insipid manner, which attends to the minute accidental discriminations of particular and individual objects, assumed that grand style of painting, which improves partial representation by the general and invariable ideas of nature.

Every seminary of learning may be said to be surrounded with an atmosphere of floating knowledge, where every mind may imbibe somewhat congenial to its own original conceptions. Knowledge, thus obtained, has always something more popular and useful than that which is forced

upon the mind by private precepts, or solitary meditation. Besides, it is generally found, that a youth more easily receives instruction from the companions of his studies, whose minds are nearly on a level with his own, than from those who are much his superiors; and it is from his equals only that he catches the fire of emulation.

One advantage, I will venture to affirm, we shall have in our Academy, which no other nation can boast. We shall have nothing to unlearn. To this praise the present race of Artists have a just claim. As far as they have yet proceeded, they are right. With us the exertions of genius will henceforward be directed to their proper objects. It will not be as it has been in other schools, where he that travelled fastest only wandered farthest from the right way.

Impressed, as I am, therefore, with such a favorable opinion of my associates in this undertaking, it would ill become me to dictate to any of them. But as these Institutions have so often failed in other nations; and as it is natural to think with regret, how much might have been done, I must take leave to offer a few hints, by which those errors may be rectified, and those defects supplied. These the Professors and Visitors may reject or adopt as they shall think proper.

I would chiefly recommend, that an implicit obedience to the *Rules of Art*, as established by the practice of the great MASTERS, should be exacted from the *young Students*. That those models, which have passed through the approbation of ages, should be considered by them as perfect and infallible guides; as subjects for their imitation, not their criticism.

I am confident, that this is the only efficacious method of making a progress in the Arts; and that he who sets out

with doubting, will find life finished before he becomes master of the rudiments. For it may be laid down as a maxim, that he who begins by presuming on his own sense, has ended his studies as soon as he has commenced them. Every opportunity, therefore, should be taken to discountenance that false and vulgar opinion, that rules are the fetters of genius: they are fetters only to men of no genius; as that armor, which upon the strong is an ornament and a defense, upon the weak and mis-shapen becomes a load, and cripples the body which it was made to protect.

How much liberty may be taken to break through those rules, and, as the poet expresses it,

To snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,

may be a subsequent consideration, when the pupils become masters themselves. It is then, when their genius has received its utmost improvement, that rules may possibly be dispensed with. But let us not destroy the scaffold, until we have raised the building.

The Directors ought more particularly to watch over the genius of those Students, who, being more advanced, are arrived at that critical period of study, on the nice management of which their future turn of taste depends. At that age it is natural for them to be more captivated with what is brilliant than with what is solid, and to prefer splendid negligence to painful and humiliating exactness.

A facility in composing, a lively, and what is called a masterly handling of the chalk or pencil, are, it must be confessed, captivating qualities to young minds, and become of course the objects of their ambition. They endeavor to imitate these dazzling excellencies, which they will find no great labor in attaining. After much time spent in these frivolous pursuits, the difficulty will be to retreat; but it

will be then too late; and there is scarce an instance of return to scrupulous labor, after the mind has been debauched and deceived by this fallacious mastery.

By this useless industry they are excluded from all power of advancing in real excellence. Whilst boys, they are arrived at their utmost perfection: they have taken the shadow for the substance; and make the mechanical felicity the chief excellence of the art, which is only an ornament, and of the merit of which few but painters themselves are judges.

This seems to me to be one of the most dangerous sources of corruption; and I speak of it from experience, not as an error which may possibly happen, but which has actually infected all foreign Academies. The directors were probably pleased with this premature dexterity in their pupils, and praised their despatch at the expense of their correctness.

But young men have not only this frivolous ambition of being thought masters of execution, inciting them on one hand, but also their natural sloth tempting them on the other. They are terrified at the prospect before them of the toil required to attain exactness. The impetuosity of youth is disgusted at the slow approaches of a regular siege, and desires, from mere impatience of labor, to take the citadel by storm. They wish to find some shorter path to excellence, and hope to obtain the reward of eminence by other means than those which the indispensable rules of art have prescribed. They must, therefore, be told again and again, that labor is the only price of solid fame, and that whatever their force of genius may be, there is no easy method of becoming a good painter.

When we read the lives of the most eminent painters,

every page informs us that no part of their time was spent in dissipation. Even an increase of fame served only to augment their industry. To be convinced with what persevering assiduity they pursued their studies, we need only reflect on their method of proceeding in their most celebrated works. When they conceived a subject, they first made a variety of sketches; then a finished drawing of the whole; after that a more correct drawing of every separate part—heads, hands, feet, and pieces of drapery; they then painted the picture, and after all, retouched it from the life. The pictures, thus wrought with such pains, now appear like the effect of enchantment, and as if some mighty genius had struck them off at a blow.

But, whilst diligence is thus recommended to the Students, the Visitors will take care that their diligence be effectual; that it be well directed, and employed on the proper object. A Student is not always advancing because he is employed; he must apply his strength to that part of the art where the real difficulties lie; to that part which distinguishes it as a liberal art; and not by mistaken industry lose his time in that which is merely ornamental. The Students, instead of vying with each other which shall have the readiest hand, should be taught to contend who shall have the purest and most correct outline; instead of striving which shall produce the brightest tint, or curiously trifling, shall give the gloss of stuffs, so as to appear real, let their ambition be directed to contend which shall dispose his drapery in the most graceful folds, which shall give the most grace and dignity to the human figure.

I must beg leave to submit one thing more to the consideration of the Visitors, which appears to me a matter of very great consequence; and the omission of which I think

a principal defect in the method of education pursued in all the Academies I have ever visited. The error I mean is, that the Students never draw exactly from the living models which they have before them. It is not, indeed, their intention, nor are they directed to do it. Their drawings resemble the model only in the attitude. They change the form according to their vague and uncertain ideas of beauty; and make a drawing rather of what they think the figure ought to be, than of what it appears. I have thought this the obstacle that has stopped the progress of many young men of real genius; and I very much doubt whether a habit of drawing correctly what we see will not give a proportionable power of drawing correctly what we imagine. He who endeavors to copy nicely the figure before him, not only acquires a habit of exactness and precision, but is continually advancing in his knowledge of the human figure; and though he seems to superficial observers to make a slower progress, he will be found at last capable of adding (without running into capricious wildness) that grace and beauty which is necessary to be given to his more finished works, and which can not be got by the moderns, as it was not acquired by the ancients, but by an attentive and well compared study of the human form.

What I think ought to enforce this method is, that it has been the practice (as may be seen by their drawings) of the great Masters in the Art. I will mention a drawing of Raffaele, *The Dispute of the Sacrament*, the print of which, by Count Cailus, is in every hand. It appears that he made his sketch from one model; and the habit he had of drawing exactly from the form before him appears by his making all the figures with the same cap, such as his model then happened to wear; so servile a copyist was this

great man, even at a time when he was allowed to be at his highest pitch of excellence.

I have seen also Academy figures by Annibale Caracci, though he was often sufficiently licentious in his finished works, drawn with all the peculiarities of an individual model.

This scrupulous exactness is so contrary to the practice of the Academies, that it is not without great deference, that I beg leave to recommend it to the consideration of the Visitors; and submit to them, whether the neglect of this method is not one of the reasons why Students so often disappoint expectation, and, being more than boys at sixteen, become less than men at thirty.

In short, the method I recommend can only be detrimental where there are but few living forms to copy; for then Students, by always drawing from one alone, will by habit be taught to overlook defects, and mistake deformity for beauty. But of this there is no danger; since the Council has determined to supply the Academy with a variety of subjects; and indeed those laws which they have drawn up, and which the Secretary will presently read for your confirmation, have in some measure precluded me from saying more upon this occasion. Instead, therefore, of offering my advice, permit me to indulge my wishes, and express my hope, that this Institution may answer the expectation of its ROYAL FOUNDER; that the present age may vie in Arts with that of LEO the Tenth; and that *the dignity of the dying Art* (to make use of an expression of Pliny) may be revived under the Reign of GEORGE THE THIRD.

DISCOURSE II.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 11, 1769.

The course and order of study.—The different stages of Art.—Much copying discountenanced.—The Artist at all times and in all places should be employed in laying up materials for the exercise of his Art.

GENTLEMEN,

I CONGRATULATE you on the honor which you have just received. I have the highest opinion of your merits, and could wish to show my sense of them in something which possibly may be more useful to you than barren praise. I could wish to lead you into such a course of study as may render your future progress answerable to your past improvement; and whilst I applaud you for what has been done, remind you how much yet remains to attain perfection.

I flatter myself, that from the long experience I have had, and the unceasing assiduity with which I have pursued those studies, in which, like you, I have been engaged, I shall be acquitted of vanity in offering some hints to your consideration. They are, indeed, in a great degree, founded upon my own mistakes in the same pursuit. But the history of errors, properly managed, often shortens the road to truth. And although no method of study, that I can offer, will of itself conduct to excellence, yet it may preserve industry from being misapplied.

In speaking to you of the Theory of the Art, I shall

only consider it as it has a relation to the *method* of your studies.

Dividing the study of painting into three distinct periods, I shall address you as having passed through the first of them, which is confined to the rudiments; including a facility of drawing any object that presents itself, a tolerable readiness in the management of colors, and an acquaintance with the most simple and obvious rules of composition.

This first degree of proficiency is, in painting, what grammar is in literature, a general preparation for whatever species of the art the student may afterwards choose for his more particular application. The power of drawing, modelling, and using colors, is very properly called the Language of the Art; and in this language, the honors you have just received prove you to have made no inconsiderable progress.

When the Artist is once enabled to express himself with some degree of correctness, he must then endeavor to collect subjects for expression; to amass a stock of ideas, to be combined and varied as occasion may require. He is now in the second period of study, in which his business is to learn all that has been known and done before his own time. Having hitherto received instructions from a particular master, he is now to consider the Art itself as his master. He must extend his capacity to more sublime and general instructions. Those perfections which lie scattered among various masters are now united in one general idea, which is henceforth to regulate his taste, and enlarge his imagination. With a variety of models thus before him, he will avoid that narrowness and poverty of conception which attends a bigoted admiration of a single master, and

will cease to follow any favorite where he ceases to excel. This period is, however, still a time of subjection and discipline. Though the Student will not resign himself blindly to any single authority, when he may have the advantage of consulting many, he must still be afraid of trusting his own judgment, and of deviating into any track where he can not find the footsteps of some former master.

The third and last period emancipates the Student from subjection to any authority, but what he shall himself judge to be supported by reason. Confiding now in his own judgment, he will consider and separate those different principles to which different modes of beauty owe their original. In the former period he sought only to know and combine excellence, wherever it was to be found, into one idea of perfection: in this he learns, what requires the most attentive survey, and the most subtle disquisition, to discriminate perfections that are incompatible with each other.

He is from this time to regard himself as holding the same rank with those masters whom he before obeyed as teachers; and as exercising a sort of sovereignty over those rules which have hitherto restrained him. Comparing now no longer the performances of Art with each other, but examining the Art itself by the standard of nature, he corrects what is erroneous, supplies what is scanty, and adds by his own observation what the industry of his predecessors may have yet left wanting to perfection. Having well established his judgment, and stored his memory, he may now without fear try the power of his imagination. The mind that has been thus disciplined may be indulged in the warmest enthusiasm, and venture to play on the borders of the wildest extravagance. The

habitual dignity which long converse with the greatest minds has imparted to him will display itself in all his attempts; and he will stand among his instructors, not as an imitator, but a rival.

These are the different stages of the Art. But as I now address myself particularly to those Students who have been this day rewarded for their happy passage through the first period, I can with no propriety suppose they want any help in the initiatory studies. My present design is to direct your view to distant excellence, and to show you the readiest path that leads to it. Of this I shall speak with such latitude, as may leave the province of the professor uninvaded; and shall not anticipate those precepts, which it is his business to give, and your duty to understand.

It is indisputably evident that a great part of every man's life, must be employed in collecting materials for the exercise of genius. Invention, strictly speaking, is little more than a new combination of those images which have been previously gathered and deposited in the memory: nothing can come of nothing: he who has laid up no materials can produce no combinations.

A Student unacquainted with the attempts of former adventurers is always apt to over-rate his own abilities; to mistake the most trifling excursions for discoveries of moment, and every coast new to him for a new-found country. If by chance he passes beyond his usual limits, he congratulates his own arrival at those regions which they who have steered a better course have long left behind them.

The productions of such minds are seldom distinguished by an air of originality: they are anticipated in their happiest efforts; and if they are found to differ in any thing from their predecessors, it is only in irregular

sallies and trifling conceits. The more extensive, therefore, your acquaintance is with the works of those who have excelled, the more extensive will be your powers of invention; and what may appear still more like a paradox, the more original will be your conceptions. But the difficulty on this occasion is to determine what ought to be proposed as models of excellence, and who ought to be considered as the properest guides.

To a young man just arrived in Italy, many of the present painters of that country are ready enough to obtrude their precepts, and to offer their own performances as examples of that perfection which they affect to recommend. The modern, however, who recommends himself as a standard, may justly be suspected as ignorant of the true end, and unacquainted with the proper object, of the art which he professes. To follow such a guide will not only retard the Student, but mislead him.

On whom, then, can he rely, or who shall show him the path that leads to excellence? The answer is obvious: those great masters who have travelled the same road with success are the most likely to conduct others. The works of those who have stood the test of ages have a claim to that respect and veneration to which no modern can pretend. The duration and stability of their fame is sufficient to evince that it has not been suspended upon the slender thread of fashion and caprice, but bound to the human heart by every tie of sympathetic approbation.

There is no danger of studying too much the works of those great men: but how they may be studied to advantage is an inquiry of great importance.

Some who have never raised their minds to the consideration of the real dignity of the Art, and who rate the

works of an Artist in proportion as they excel or are defective in the mechanical parts, look on theory as something that may enable them to talk but not to paint better; and, confining themselves entirely to mechanical practice, very assiduously toil on in the drudgery of copying, and think they make a rapid progress while they faithfully exhibit the minutest part of a favorite picture. This appears to me a very tedious, and, I think, a very erroneous, method of proceeding. Of every large composition, even of those which are most admired, a great part may be truly said to be *common-place*. This, though it takes up much time in copying, conduces little to improvement. I consider general copying as a delusive kind of industry: the Student satisfies himself with the appearance of doing something: he falls into the dangerous habit of imitating without selecting, and of laboring without any determinate object; as it requires no effort of the mind, he sleeps over his work: and those powers of invention and composition which ought particularly to be called out, and put in action, lie torpid, and lose their energy for want of exercise.

How incapable those are of producing any thing of their own, who have spent much of their time in making finished copies, is well known to all who are conversant with our art.

To suppose that the complication of powers, and variety of ideas necessary to that mind which aspires to the first honors in the Art of Painting, can be obtained by the frigid contemplation of a few single models, is no less absurd, than it would be in him who wishes to be a poet, to imagine that by translating a tragedy he can acquire to himself sufficient knowledge of the appearances of nature, the operations of the passions, and the incidents of life.

The great use in copying, if it be at all useful, should seem to be in learning to color; yet even coloring will never be perfectly attained by servilely copying the model before you. An eye critically nice can only be formed by observing well-colored pictures with attention; and by close inspection, and minute examination, you will discover, at last, the manner of handling, the artifices of contrast, glazing, and other expedients by which good colorists have raised the value of their tints, and by which nature has been so happily imitated.

I must inform you, however, that old pictures, deservedly celebrated for their coloring, are often so changed by dirt and varnish that we ought not to wonder if they do not appear equal to their reputation in the eyes of unexperienced painters, or young Students. An artist whose judgment is matured by long observation considers rather what the picture once was, than what it is at present. He has by habit acquired a power of seeing the brilliancy of tints through the cloud by which it is obscured. An exact imitation, therefore, of those pictures, is likely to fill the Student's mind with false opinions, and to send him back a colorist of his own formation, with ideas equally remote from nature and from art, from the genuine practice of the masters and the real appearances of things.

Following these rules, and using these precautions, when you have clearly and distinctly learned in what good coloring consists, you can not do better than to have recourse to nature herself, who is always at hand, and in comparison of whose true splendor the best colored pictures are but faint and feeble.

However, as the practice of copying is not entirely to

be excluded, since the mechanical practice of painting is learned in some measure by it, let those choice parts only be selected which have recommended the work to notice. If its excellence consists in its general effect, it would be proper to make slight sketches of the machinery and general management of the picture. Those sketches should be kept always by you for the regulation of your style. In stead of copying the touches of those great masters, copy only their conceptions. Instead of treading in their footsteps, endeavor only to keep the same road. Labor to invent on their general principles and way of thinking. Possess yourself with their spirit. Consider with yourself how a Michael Angelo or a Raffaele would have treated this subject; and work yourself into a belief that your picture is to be seen and criticised by them when completed. Even an attempt of this kind will rouse your powers.

But as mere enthusiasm will carry you but a little way, let me recommend a practice that may be equivalent to and will perhaps more efficaciously contribute to your advancement, than even the verbal corrections of those masters themselves, could they be obtained. What I would propose is, that you should enter into a kind of competition, by painting a similar subject, and making a companion to any picture that you consider as a model. After you have finished your work, place it near the model, and compare them carefully together. You will then not only see but feel your own deficiencies more sensibly than by precepts, or any other means of instruction. The true principles of painting will mingle with your thoughts. Ideas thus fixed by sensible objects will be certain and definitive; and, sinking deep into the mind, will not only be more just but more lasting than

those presented to you by precepts only, which will always be fleeting, variable, and undetermined.

This method of comparing your own efforts with those of some great master is indeed a severe and mortifying task, to which none will submit but such as have great views, with fortitude sufficient to forego the gratifications of present vanity for future honor. When the Student has succeeded in some measure to his own satisfaction, and has felicitated himself on his success, to go voluntary to a tribunal where he knows his vanity must be humbled, and all self-approbation must vanish, requires not only great resolution but great humility. To him, however, who has the ambition to be a real master, the solid satisfaction which proceeds from a consciousness of his advancement (of which seeing his own faults is the first step) will very abundantly compensate for the mortification of present disappointment. There is, besides, this alleviating circumstance: every discovery he makes, every acquisition of knowledge he attains, seems to proceed from his own sagacity: and thus he acquires a confidence in himself sufficient to keep up the resolution of perseverance.

We all must have experienced how lazily, and, consequently, how ineffectually, instruction is received when forced upon the mind by others. Few have been taught to any purpose who have not been their own teachers. We prefer those instructions which we have given ourselves, from our affection to the instructor; and they are more effectual, from being received into the mind at the very time when it is most open and eager to receive them.

With respect to the pictures that you are to choose for your models, I could wish that you would take the world's opinion rather than your own. In other words,

I would have you choose those of established reputation rather than follow your own fancy. If you should not admire them at first, you will, by endeavoring to imitate them, find that the world has not been mistaken.

It is not an easy task to point out those various excellencies for your imitation which lie distributed amongst the various schools. An endeavor to do this may, perhaps, be the subject of some future discourse. I will, therefore, at present, only recommend a model for style in painting, which is a branch of the art more immediately necessary to the young Student. Style in painting is the same as in writing, a power over materials, whether words or colors, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed. And in this Ludovico Caracci (I mean his best works) appears to me to approach the nearest to perfection. His unaffected breadth of light and shadow, the simplicity of coloring, which, holding its proper rank, does not draw aside the least part of the attention from the subject, and the solemn effect of that twilight which seems diffused over his pictures, appear to me to correspond with grave and dignified subjects, better than the more artificial brilliancy of sunshine which enlightens the pictures of Titian; though Tintoret thought that Titian's coloring was the model of perfection, and would correspond even with the sublime of Michael Angelo; and that if Angelo had colored like Titian, or Titian designed like Angelo, the world would once have had a perfect painter.

It is our misfortune, however, that those works of Caracci, which I would recommend to the Student, are not often found out of Bologna. The *St. Francis in the Midst of his Friars*, *The Transfiguration*, *The Birth of St. John the Baptist*, *The Calling of St. Matthew*, *The St. Jerome*,

The Fresco Paintings in the Zampieri palace, are all worthy the attention of the Student. And I think those who travel would do well to allot a much greater portion of their time to that city than it has been hitherto the custom to bestow.

In this art, as in others, there are many teachers who profess to show the nearest way to excellence; and many expedients have been invented by which the toil of study might be saved. But let no man be seduced to idleness by specious promises. Excellence is never granted to man, but as the reward of labor. It argues, indeed, no small strength of mind to persevere in habits of industry, without the pleasure of perceiving those advances; which, like the hand of a clock, whilst they make hourly approaches to their point, yet proceed so slowly as to escape observation. A facility of drawing, like that of playing upon a musical instrument, can not be acquired but by an infinite number of acts. I need not, therefore, enforce by many words the necessity of continual application; nor tell you that the port-crayon ought to be for ever in your hands. Various methods will occur to you by which this power may be acquired. I would particularly recommend, that after your return from the Academy (where I suppose your attendance to be constant) you would endeavor to draw the figure by memory. I will even venture to add, that by perseverance in this custom you will become able to draw the human figure tolerably correct, with as little effort of the mind as is required to trace with a pen the letters of the alphabet.

That this facility is not unattainable, some members in this Academy give a sufficient proof. And be assured, that, if this power is not acquired whilst you are young,

there will be no time for it afterwards; at least the attempt will be attended with as much difficulty as those experience who learn to read or write after they have arrived at the age of maturity.

But while I mention the port-crayon as the Student's constant companion, he must still remember, that the pencil is the instrument by which he must hope to obtain eminence. What, therefore, I wish to impress upon you is, that, whenever an opportunity offers, you paint your studies instead of drawing them. This will give you such a facility in using colors, that in time they will arrange themselves under the pencil, even without the attention of the hand that conducts it. If one act excluded the other, this advice could not with any propriety be given. But if painting comprises both drawing and coloring, and if by a short struggle of resolute industry, the same expedition is attainable in painting as in drawing on paper, I can not see what objection can justly be made to the practice, or why that should be done by parts which may be done altogether.

If we turn our eyes to the several Schools of Painting, and consider their respective excellencies, we shall find that those who excel most in coloring pursued this method. The Venetian and Flemish schools, which owe much of their fame to coloring, have enriched the cabinets of the collectors of drawings with very few examples. Those of Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoret, and the Bassans, are in general slight and undetermined. Their sketches on paper are as rude as their pictures are excellent in regard to harmony of coloring. Correggio and Baroccio have left few, if any, finished drawings behind them. And in the Flemish school, Rubens and Vandyck made their designs

for the most part either in colors or in chiaro-oscuro. It is as common to find studies of the Venetian and Flemish Painters on canvass as of the schools of Rome and Florence on paper. Not but that many finished drawings are sold under the names of those masters. Those, however, are undoubtedly the productions either of engravers or their scholars, who copied their works.

These instructions I have ventured to offer from my own experience; but as they deviate widely from received opinions, I offer them with diffidence, and when better are suggested shall retract them without regret.

There is one precept, however, in which I shall only be opposed by the vain, the ignorant, and the idle. I am not afraid that I shall repeat it too often. You must have no dependence on your own genius. If you have great talents, industry will improve them: if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency. Nothing is denied to well directed labor: nothing is to be obtained without it. Not to enter into metaphysical discussions on the nature or essence of genius, I will venture to assert, that assiduity unabated by difficulty, and a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, will produce effects similar to those which some call the result of *natural powers*.

Though a man can not at all times, and in all places, paint or draw, yet the mind can prepare itself by laying in proper materials, at all times, and in all places. Both Livy and Plutarch, in describing Philopoemen, one of the ablest generals of antiquity, have given us a striking picture of a mind always intent on its profession, and by assiduity obtaining those excellencies which some all their lives vainly expect from nature. I shall quote the passage

in Livy at length, as it runs parallel with the practice I would recommend to the Painter, the Sculptor and Architect.

“Philopœmen was a man eminent for his sagacity and experience in choosing ground, and in leading armies; to which he formed his mind by perpetual meditation, in times of peace as well as war. When, in any occasional journey, he came to a strait, difficult passage, if he was alone, he considered with himself, and if he was in company he asked his friends, what it would be best to do if in this place they had found an enemy, either in the front or in the rear, on the one side or on the other? ‘It might happen,’ says he, ‘that the enemy to be opposed might come on drawn up in regular lines, or in a tumultuous body formed only by the nature of the place.’ He then considered a little what ground he should take; what number of soldiers he should use, and what arms he should give them; where he should lodge his carriages, his baggage, and the defenseless followers of his camp; how many guards, and of what kind, he should send to defend them: and whether it would be better to press forward along the pass, or recover by retreat his former station: he would consider likewise where his camp could most commodiously be formed; how much ground he should enclose within his trenches; where he should have the convenience of water, and where he might find plenty of wood and forage; and when he should break up his camp on the following day, through what road he could most safely pass, and in what form he should dispose his troops. With such thoughts and disquisitions he had from his early years so exercised his mind, that on these occasions nothing could happen which he had not already been accustomed to consider.”

I can not help imagining that I see a promising young painter equally vigilant, whether at home or abroad, in the streets or in the fields. Every object that presents itself is to him a lesson. He regards all nature with a view to his profession, and combines her beauties, or corrects her defects. He examines the countenance of men under the influence of passion; and often catches the most pleasing hints from subjects of turbulence or deformity. Even bad pictures themselves supply him with useful documents; and, as Lionardo da Vinci has observed, he improves upon the fanciful images that are sometimes seen in the fire, or are accidentally sketched upon a discolored wall.

The Artist who has his mind thus filled with ideas, and his hand made expert by practice, works with ease and readiness; whilst he who would have you believe that he is waiting for the inspirations of Genius, is in reality at a loss how to begin; and is at last delivered of his monsters with difficulty and pain.

The well-grounded painter, on the contrary, has only maturely to consider his subject, and all the mechanical parts of his art follow without his exertion. Conscious of the difficulty of obtaining what he possesses, he makes no pretensions to secrets, except those of closer application. Without conceiving the smallest jealousy against others, he is contented that all shall be as great as himself who have undergone the same fatigue; and as his pre-eminence depends not upon a trick, he is free from the painful suspicions of a juggler who lives in perpetual fear lest his trick should be discovered.

DISCOURSE III.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 14, 1770.

The great leading principles of the grand style.—Of beauty.—The genuine habits^e of nature to be distinguished from those of fashion.

GENTLEMEN,

It is not easy to speak with propriety to so many Students of different ages and different degrees of advancement. The mind requires nourishment adapted to its growth; and what may have promoted our earlier efforts might retard us in our nearer approaches to perfection.

The first endeavors of a young painter, as I have remarked in a former discourse, must be employed in the attainment of mechanical dexterity, and confined to the mere imitation of the object before him. Those who have advanced beyond the rudiments, may, perhaps, find advantage in reflecting on the advice which I have likewise given them, when I recommended the diligent study of the works of our great predecessors; but I at the same time endeavored to guard them against an implicit submission to the authority of any one master however excellent, or, by a strict imitation of his manner, precluding themselves from the abundance and variety of Nature. I will now add, that Nature herself is not to be too closely copied. There are excellencies in the art of painting beyond what is commonly called the imitation of Nature; and these excellencies I wish to point out. The Students who, having passed

through the initiatory exercises, are more advanced in the art, and who, sure of their hand, have leisure to exert their understanding, must now be told, that a mere copier of nature can never produce any thing great; can never raise and enlarge the conceptions, or warm the heart of the spectator.

The wish of the genuine painter must be more extensive: instead of endeavoring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavor to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise, by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame, by captivating the imagination.

The principle now laid down, that the perfection of this art does not consist in mere imitation, is far from being new or singular. It is, indeed, supported by the general opinion of the enlightened part of mankind. The poets, orators, and rhetoricians of antiquity, are continually enforcing this position—that all the arts receive their perfection from an ideal beauty, superior to what is to be found in individual nature. They are ever referring to the practice of the painters and sculptors of their times, particularly Phidias (the favorite artist of antiquity) to illustrate their assertions. As if they could not sufficiently express their admiration of his genius by what they knew, they have recourse to poetical enthusiasm: they call it inspiration; a gift from heaven. The artist is supposed to have ascended the celestial regions, to furnish his mind with this perfect idea of beauty. “He,” says Proclus,* “who takes for his model such forms as Nature produces, and

* Lib. 2 in *Timæum Platonis*, as cited by Junius de *Pictura Veterum*.—R

confines himself to an exact imitation of them, will never attain to what is perfectly beautiful. For the works of Nature are full of disproportion, and fall very short of the true standard of beauty. So that Phidias, when he formed his Jupiter, did not copy any object ever presented to his sight, but contemplated only that image which he had conceived in his mind from Homer's description." And thus Cicero, speaking of the same Phidias:—"Neither did this artist," says he, "when he carved the image of Jupiter or Minerva, set before him any one human figure, as a pattern, which he was to copy; but having a more perfect idea of beauty fixed in his mind, this is steadily contemplated, and to the imitation of this, all his skill and labor were directed."

➤ The Moderns are not less convinced than the Ancients of this superior power existing in the art; nor less sensible of its effects. Every language has adopted terms expressive of this excellence. The *gusto grande* of the Italians, the *beau ideal* of the French, and the *great style, genius, and taste* among the English, are but different appellations of the same thing. It is this intellectual dignity, they say, that ennobles the Painter's art; that lays the line between him and the mere mechanic; and produces those great effects in an instant, which eloquence and poetry, by slow and repeated efforts, are scarcely able to attain.

— Such is the warmth with which both the Ancients and Moderns speak of this divine principle of the art; but, as I have formerly observed, enthusiastic admiration seldom promotes knowledge. Though a Student by such praise may have his attention roused, and a desire excited, of running in this great career, yet it is possible that what has been said to excite, may only serve to deter him. He

examines his own mind, and perceives there nothing of that divine inspiration with which he is told so many others have been favored. He never travelled to heaven to gather new ideas; and he finds himself possessed of no other qualifications than what mere common observation and a plain understanding can confer. Thus he becomes gloomy amidst the splendor of figurative declamation, and thinks it hopeless to pursue an object which he supposes out of the reach of human industry.

But on this, as upon many other occasions, we ought to distinguish how much is to be given to enthusiasm, and how much to reason. We ought to allow for, and we ought to commend, that strength of vivid expression, which is necessary to convey, in its full force, the highest sense of the most complete effect of art; taking care, at the same time, not to lose in terms of vague admiration that solidity and truth of principle upon which alone we can reason, and may be enabled to practice.

It is not easy to define in what this great style consists; nor to describe, by words, the proper means of acquiring it, if the mind of the Student should be at all capable of such an acquisition. Could we teach taste or genius by rules, they would be no longer taste and genius. But though there neither are, nor can be any precise invariable rules for the exercise, or the acquisition, of these great qualities, yet we may truly say, that they always operate in proportion to our attention in observing the works of Nature, to our skill in selecting, and to our care in digesting, methodizing, and comparing our observations. There are many beauties in our art that seem, at first, to lie without the reach of precept, and yet may easily be reduced to practical principles. Experience is all in all:

but it is not every one who profits by experience; and most people err, not so much from want of capacity to find their object, as from not knowing what object to pursue. This great ideal perfection and beauty are not to be sought in the heavens, but upon the earth. They are about us, and upon every side of us. But the power of discovering what is deformed in nature, or, in other words, what is particular and uncommon, can be acquired only by experience; and the whole beauty and grandeur of the art consists, in my opinion, in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind.

All the objects which are exhibited to our view by Nature, upon close examination will be found to have their blemishes and defects. The most beautiful forms have something about them like weakness, minuteness, or imperfection. But it is not every eye that perceives these blemishes. It must be an eye long used to the contemplation and comparison of these forms; and which, by a long habit of observing what any set of objects of the same kind have in common, has acquired the power of discerning what each wants in particular. This long, laborious comparison should be the first study of the painter who aims at the great style. By this means, he acquires a just idea of beautiful forms; he corrects Nature by herself, her imperfect state by her more perfect. His eye being enabled to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescences, and deformities of things, from their general figures, he makes out an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original; and what may seem a paradox, he learns to design naturally by drawing his figures unlike to any one object. This idea of the perfect state of

Nature, which the artist calls the Ideal beauty, is the great leading principle by which works of genius are conducted. By this Phidias acquired his fame. He wrought upon a sober principle what has so much excited the enthusiasm of the world; and by this method you, who have courage to tread the same path, may acquire equal reputation.

This is the idea which has acquired, and which seems to have a right to, the epithet of *divine*; as it may be said to preside, like a supreme judge, over all the productions of Nature, appearing to be possessed of the will and intention of the Creator, as far as they regard the external form of living beings. When a man once possesses this idea in its perfection, there is no danger but that he will be sufficiently warmed by it himself, and be able to warm and ravish every one else.

Thus it is from a reiterated experience, and a close comparison of the objects in Nature, that an artist becomes possessed of the idea of that central form, if I may so express it, from which every deviation is deformity. But the investigation of this form, I grant, is painful, and I know but of one method of shortening the road; this is, by a careful study of the works of the ancient sculptors; who, being indefatigable in the school of Nature, have left models of that perfect form behind them, which an artist would prefer as supremely beautiful, who had spent his whole life in that single contemplation. But if industry carried them thus far, may not you also hope for the same reward from the same labor? We have the same school opened to us that was opened to them; for Nature denies her instructions to none who desire to become her pupils.

This laborious investigation, I am aware, must appear superfluous to those who think every thing is to be done

by felicity and the powers of native genius. Even the great Bacon treats with ridicule the idea of confining proportion to rules, or of producing beauty by selection. "A man can not tell," says he, "whether Apelles or Albert Durer were the more trifler; whereof the one would make a personage by geometrical proportions; the other, by taking the best parts out of divers faces, to make one excellent. . . . The painter," he adds, "must do it by a kind of felicity . . . and not by rule."*

It is not safe to question any opinion of so great a writer, and so profound a thinker, as undoubtedly Bacon was. But he studies brevity to excess; and therefore his meaning is sometimes doubtful. If he means that beauty has nothing to do with rule, he is mistaken. There is a rule, obtained out of general nature, to contradict which is to fall into deformity. Whenever any thing is done beyond this rule, it is in virtue of some other rule which is followed along with it, but which does not contradict it. Every thing which is wrought with certainty, it is wrought upon some principle. If it is not, it can not be repeated. If by felicity is meant any thing of chance or hazard, or something born with a man, and not earned, I can not agree with this great philosopher. Every object which pleases must give us pleasure upon some certain principles: but as the objects of pleasure are almost infinite, so their principles vary without end, and every man finds them out, not by felicity or successful hazard, but by care and sagacity.

To the principle I have laid down, that the idea of beauty in each species of beings is an invariable one, it may be objected, that in every particular species there are various central forms, which are separate and distinct from

* *Essays*, p. 252, edit. 1625.

each other, and yet are undeniably beautiful; that in the human figure, for instance, the beauty of Hercules is one, of the Gladiator another, of the Apollo another; which makes so many different ideas of beauty.

It is true, indeed, that these figures are each perfect in their kind, though of different characters and proportions; but still none of them is the representation of an individual, but of a class. And as there is one general form, which, as I have said, belongs to the human kind at large, so in each of these classes there is one common idea and central form, which is the abstract of the various individual forms belonging to that class. Thus, though the forms of childhood and age differ exceedingly, there is a common form in childhood, and a common form in age, which is the more perfect, as it is more remote from all peculiarities. But I must add further, that though the most perfect forms of each of the general divisions of the human figure are ideal and superior to any individual form of that class; yet the highest perfection of the human figure is not to be found in any one of them. It is not in the Hercules, nor in the Gladiator, nor in the Apollo; but in that form which is taken from all, and which partakes equally of the activity of the Gladiator, of the delicacy of the Apollo, and of the muscular strength of the Hercules. For perfect beauty in any species must combine all the characters which are beautiful in that species. It can not consist in any one to the exclusion of the rest: no one, therefore, must be predominant, that no one may be deficient.

The knowledge of these different characters, and the power of separating and distinguishing them, is undoubtedly necessary to the painter, who is to vary his compositions with figures of various forms and proportions, though he is

never to lose sight of the general idea of perfection in each kind.

There is, likewise, a kind of symmetry, or proportion, which may properly be said to belong to deformity. A figure lean or corpulent, tall or short, though deviating from beauty, may still have a certain union of the various parts, which may contribute to make them on the whole not unpleasing.

When the Artist has by diligent attention acquired a clear and distinct idea of beauty and symmetry; when he has reduced the variety of nature to the abstract idea; his next task will be to become acquainted with the genuine habits of nature, as distinguished from those of fashion. For in the same manner, and on the same principles, as he has acquired the knowledge of the real forms of nature, distinct from accidental deformity, he must endeavor to separate simple chaste nature, from those adventitious, those affected and forced airs or actions, with which she is loaded by modern education.

Perhaps I can not better explain what I mean, than by reminding you of what was taught us by the Professor of Anatomy, in respect to the natural position and movement of the feet. He observed that the fashion of turning them outwards was contrary to the intent of nature, as might be seen from the structure of the bones, and from the weakness that proceeded from that manner of standing. To this we may add the erect position of the head, the projection of the chest, the walking with straight knees, and many such actions, which we know to be merely the result of fashion, and what nature never warranted, as we are sure that we have been taught them when children.

I have mentioned but a few of those instances, in

which vanity or caprice have contrived to distort and disfigure the human form; your own recollection will add to these a thousand more of ill-understood methods, which have been practised to disguise nature among our dancing-masters, hair-dressers, and tailors, in their various schools of deformity.*

However the mechanic and ornamental arts may sacrifice to Fashion, she must be entirely excluded from the Art of Painting; the painter must never mistake this capricious challenging for the genuine offspring of nature; he must divest himself of all prejudices in favor of his age or country; he must disregard all local and temporary ornaments, and look only on those general habits which are every where and always the same; he addresses his works to the people of every country and every age, he calls upon posterity to be his spectators, and says, with Zeuxis, *In æternitatem pingo*.

The neglect of separating modern fashions from the habits of nature, leads to that ridiculous style which has been practised by some painters, who have given to Grecian heroes the airs and graces practised in the court of LOUIS XIV.; an absurdity almost as great as it would have been to have dressed them after the fashion of that court.

To avoid this error, however, and to retain the true simplicity of nature, is a task more difficult than at first sight it may appear. The prejudices in favor of the fashions and customs that we have been used to, and which

* "Those," says Quintilian, "who are taken with the outward show of things, think that there is more beauty in persons who are trimmed, curled, and painted, than uncorrupt nature can give; as if beauty were merely the effect of the corruption of manners."—R

are justly called a second nature, make it too often difficult to distinguish that which is natural from that which is the result of education; they frequently even give a predilection in favor of the artificial mode; and almost every one is apt to be guided by those local prejudices, who has not chastised his mind, and regulated the instability of his affections by the eternal invariable idea of nature.

Here, then, as before, we must have recourse to the Ancients as instructors. It is from a careful study of their works that you will be enabled to attain to the real simplicity of nature; they will suggest many observations which would probably escape you, if your study were confined to nature alone. And, indeed, I can not help suspecting, that, in this instance, the ancients had an easier task than the moderns. They had, probably, little or nothing to unlearn, as their manners were nearly approaching to this desirable simplicity; while the modern artist, before he can see the truth of things, is obliged to remove a veil, with which the fashion of the times has thought proper to cover her.

Having gone thus far in our investigation of the great style in painting; if we now should suppose that the artist has found the true idea of beauty, which enables him to give his works a correct and perfect design; if we should suppose, also, that he has acquired a knowledge of the undulterated habits of nature, which gives him simplicity; the rest of his task is, perhaps, less than is generally imagined. Beauty and simplicity have so great a share in the composition of a great style, that he who has acquired them has little else to learn. It must not, indeed, be forgotten, that there is a nobleness of conception, which goes beyond any thing in the mere exhibition even of perfect

form; there is an art of animating and dignifying the figures with intellectual grandeur, of impressing the appearance of philosophic wisdom, or heroic virtue. This can only be acquired by him that enlarges the sphere of his understanding by a variety of knowledge, and warms his imagination with the best productions of ancient and modern poetry.

A hand thus exercised, and a mind thus instructed, will bring the art to a higher degree of excellence than, perhaps, it has hitherto attained in this country. Such a student will disdain the humbler walks of painting, which, however profitable, can never assure him a permanent reputation. He will leave the meaner artist servilely to suppose that those are the best pictures, which are most likely to deceive the spectator. He will permit the lower painter, like the florist or collector of shells, to exhibit the minute discriminations, which distinguish one object of the same species from another; while he, like the philosopher, will consider nature in the abstract, and represent in every one of his figures the character of its species.

If deceiving the eye were the only business of the art, there is no doubt, indeed, but the minute painter would be more apt to succeed; but it is not the eye, it is the mind which the painter of genius desires to address; nor will he waste a moment upon those smaller objects which only serve to catch the sense, to divide the attention, and to counteract his great design of speaking to the heart.

This is the ambition which I wish to excite in your minds; and the object I have had in my view, throughout this discourse, is that one great idea which gives to painting its true dignity, which entitles it to the name of a liberal art, and ranks it as a sister of poetry.

It may possibly have happened to many young students, whose application was sufficient to overcome all difficulties, and whose minds were capable of embracing the most extensive views, that they have, by a wrong direction originally given, spent their lives in the meaner walks of painting, without ever knowing there was a nobler to pursue. Albert Durer, as Vasari has justly remarked, would probably have been one of the first painters of his age (and he lived in an era of great artists) had he been initiated into those great principles of the art, which were so well understood and practised by his contemporaries in Italy. But unluckily having never seen nor heard of any other manner, he, without doubt, considered his own as perfect.

As for the various departments of painting, which do not presume to make such high pretensions, they are many. None of them are without their merit, though none enter into competition with this universal presiding idea of the art. The painters who have applied themselves more particularly to low and vulgar characters, and who express with precision the various shades of passion, as they are exhibited by vulgar minds (such as we see in the works of Hogarth) deserve great praise; but as their genius has been employed on low and confined subjects, the praise which we give must be as limited as its object. The merry-making or quarreling of the Boors of Teniers; the same sort of productions of Brouwer or Ostade, are excellent in their kind; and the excellence and its praise will be in proportion, as, in those limited subjects, and peculiar forms, they introduce more or less of the expression of those passions, as they appear in general and more enlarged nature. This principle may be applied to the Battle-pieces of Bourguognone, the French Gallantries of Wat-

teau, and even beyond the exhibition of animal life, to the Landscapes of Claude Lorraine, and the Sea-Views of Vandervelde. All these painters have, in general, the same right, in different degrees, to the name of a painter, which a satirist, an epigrammatist, a sonneteer, a writer of pastorals, or descriptive poetry, has to that of a poet.

In the same rank, and perhaps of not so great merit, is the cold painter of portraits. But his correct and just imitation of his object has its merit. Even the painter of still life, whose highest ambition is to give a minute representation of every part of those low objects which he sets before him, deserves praise in proportion to his attainment; because no part of this excellent art, so much the ornament of polished life, is destitute of value and use. These, however, are by no means the views to which the mind of the student ought to be *primarily* directed. Having begun by aiming at better things, if from particular inclination, or from the taste of the time and place he lives in, or from necessity, or from failure in the highest attempts, he is obliged to descend lower, he will bring into the lower sphere of art a grandeur of composition and character, that will raise and ennoble his works far above their natural rank.

A man is not weak, though he may not be able to wield the club of Hercules; nor does a man always practice that which he esteems the best; but does that which he can best do. In moderate attempts there are many walks open to the artist. But as the idea of beauty is of necessity but one, so there can be but one great mode of painting; the leading principle of which I have endeavored to explain.

I should be sorry, if what is here recommended should

be at all understood to countenance a careless or undetermined manner of painting. For, though the painter is to overlook the accidental discriminations of nature, he is to exhibit distinctly, and with precision, the general forms of things. A firm and determined outline is one of the characteristics of the great style in painting; and, let me add, that he who possesses the knowledge of the exact form which every part of nature ought to have, will be fond of expressing that knowledge with correctness and precision in all his works.

To conclude: I have endeavored to reduce the idea of beauty to general principles; and I had the pleasure to observe that the Professor of Painting proceeded in the same method, when he showed you that the artifice of contrast was founded but on one principle. I am convinced that this is the only means of advancing science; of clearing the mind from a confused heap of contradictory observations, that do but perplex and puzzle the student, when he compares them, or misguide him if he gives himself up to their authority; bringing them under one general head, can alone give rest and satisfaction to an inquisitive mind.

DISCOURSE IV.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1771.

General ideas the presiding principle which regulates every part of Art; Invention, Expression, Coloring, and Drapery.—Two distinct styles in history-painting; the grand and the ornamental.—The schools in which each is to be found.—The composite style.—The style formed on local customs and habits, or a partial view of nature.

GENTLEMEN,

THE value and rank of every art is in proportion to the mental labor employed in it, or the mental pleasure produced by it. As this principle is observed or neglected, our profession becomes either a liberal art, or a mechanical trade. In the hands of one man, it makes the highest pretensions, as it is addressed to the noblest faculties: in those of another, it is reduced to a mere matter of ornament; and the painter has but the humble province of furnishing our apartments with elegance.

This exertion of mind, which is the only circumstance that truly ennobles our Art, makes the great distinction between the Roman and Venetian schools. I have formerly observed that perfect form is produced by leaving out particularities, and retaining only general ideas: I shall now endeavor to show that this principle, which I have proved to be metaphysically just, extends itself to every part of the Art; that it gives what is called the *grand style*, to Invention, to Composition, to Expression, and even to Coloring and Drapery.

Invention, in Painting, does not imply the invention of the subject, for that is commonly supplied by the Poet or Historian. With respect to the choice, no subject can be proper that is not generally interesting. It ought to be either some eminent instance of heroic action or heroic suffering. There must be something, either in the action or in the object, in which men are universally concerned, and which powerfully strikes upon the public sympathy.

Strictly speaking, indeed, no subject can be of universal, hardly can it be of general, concern; but there are events and characters so popularly known in those countries where our Art is in request, that they may be considered as sufficiently general for all our purposes. Such are the great events of Greek and Roman fable and history, which early education, and the usual course of reading, have made familiar and interesting to all Europe, without being degraded by the vulgarity of ordinary life in any country. Such, too, are the capital subjects of Scripture history, which, beside their general notoriety, become venerable by their connection with our religion.

As it is required that the subject selected should be a general one, it is no less necessary that it should be kept unembarrassed with whatever may any way serve to divide the attention of the spectator. Whenever a story is related, every man forms a picture in his mind of the action and expression of the persons employed. The power of representing this mental picture on canvass is what we call invention in a painter. And as, in the conception of this ideal picture, the mind does not enter into the minute peculiarities of the dress, furniture, or scene of action; so, when the painter comes to represent it, he contrives those little necessary concomitant circumstances in such a man-

ner that they shall strike the spectator no more than they did himself in his first conception of the story.

I am very ready to allow, that some circumstances of minuteness and particularity frequently tend to give an air of truth to a piece, and to interest the spectator in an extraordinary manner. Such circumstances, therefore, can not wholly be rejected: but if there be any thing in the Art which requires peculiar nicety of discernment, it is the disposition of these minute circumstantial parts; which, according to the judgment employed in the choice, become so useful to truth, or so injurious to grandeur.

However, the usual and most dangerous error is on the side of minuteness; and, therefore, I think caution most necessary where most have failed. The general idea constitutes real excellence. All smaller things, however perfect in their way, are to be sacrificed without mercy to the greater. The painter will not inquire what things may be admitted without much censure; he will not think it enough to show that they may be there; he will show that they must be there; that their absence would render his picture maimed and defective.

Thus, though to the principal group a second or third be added, and a second and third mass of light, care must be taken that these subordinate actions and lights, neither each in particular, nor all together, come into any degree of competition with the principal: they should merely make a part of that whole which would be imperfect without them. To every kind of painting this rule may be applied. Even in portraits, the grace, and, we may add, the likeness, consists more in taking the general air, than in observing the exact similitude of every feature.

Thus figures must have a ground whereon to stand; they

must be clothed ; there must be a background : there must be light and shadow ; but none of these ought to appear to have taken up any part of the artist's attention. They should be so managed as not even to catch that of the spectator. We know well enough, when we analyze a piece, the difficulty and the subtilty with which an artist adjusts the background drapery, and masses of light ; we know that a considerable part of the grace and effect of his picture depends upon them ; but this art is so much concealed, even to a judicious eye, that no remains of any of these subordinate parts occur to the memory when the picture is not present.

The great end of the art is to strike the imagination. The painter, therefore, is to make no ostentation of the means by which this is done ; the spectator is only to feel the result in his bosom. An inferior artist is unwilling that any part of his industry should be lost upon the spectator. He takes as much pains to discover, as the greater artist does to conceal, the marks of his subordinate assiduity. In works of the lower kind, every thing appears studied, and encumbered ; it is all boastful art, and open affectation. The ignorant often part from such pictures with wonder in their mouths and indifference in their hearts.

But it is not enough in Invention that the Artist should restrain and keep under all the inferior parts of his subject ; he must sometimes deviate from vulgar and strict historical truth, in pursuing the grandeur of his design.

How much the great style exacts from its professors to conceive and represent their subjects in a poetical manner, not confined to mere matter of fact, may be seen in the Cartoons of Raffaello. In all the pictures in which the

painter has represented the apostles, he has drawn them with great nobleness; he has given them as much dignity as the human figure is capable of receiving; yet we are expressly told in Scripture they had no such respectable appearance; and of St. Paul, in particular, we are told, by himself, that his *bodily* presence was *mean*. Alexander is said to have been of a low stature: a Painter ought not so to represent him. Agesilaus was low, lame, and of a mean appearance: none of these defects ought to appear in a piece of which he is the hero. In conformity to custom, I call this part of the art History Painting; it ought to be called Poetical, as in reality it is.

All this is not falsifying any fact; it is taking an allowed poetical licence. A painter of portraits, retains the individual likeness; a painter of history, shows the man by showing his action. A painter must compensate the natural deficiencies of his art. He has but one sentence to utter, but one moment to exhibit. He can not, like the poet or historian expatiate, and impress the mind with great veneration for the character of the hero or saint he represents, though he lets us know, at the same time, that the saint was deformed, or the hero lame. The painter has no other means of giving an idea of the dignity of the mind, but by that external appearance which grandeur of thought does generally, though not always, impress on the countenance; and by that correspondence of figure to sentiment and situation, which all men wish, but can not command. The painter who may in this one particular attain with ease what others desire in vain, ought to give all that he possibly can, since there are so many circumstances of true greatness that he can not give at all. He can not make his hero talk like a great man; he must

make him look like one. For which reason he ought to be well studied in the analysis of those circumstances which constitute dignity of appearance in real life.

As in Invention, so likewise in Expression, care must be taken not to run into particularities. Those expressions alone should be given to the figures which their respective situations generally produce. Nor is this enough; each person should also have that expression which men of his rank generally exhibit. The joy, or the grief, of a character of dignity is not to be expressed in the same manner as a similar passion in a vulgar face. Upon this principle, Bernini, perhaps, may be subject to censure. This sculptor, in many respects admirable, has given a very mean expression to his statue of David, who is represented as just going to throw the stone from the sling; and, in order to give it the expression of energy, he has made him biting his under lip. This expression is far from being general, and still farther from being dignified. He might have seen it in an instance or two; and he mistook accident for generality.

With respect to Coloring, though it may appear at first a part of painting merely mechanical, yet it still has its rules, and those grounded upon that presiding principle which regulates both the great and the little in the study of a painter. By this, the first effect of the picture is produced; and as this is performed, the spectator, as he walks the gallery, will stop, or pass along. To give a general air of grandeur at first view, all trifling, or artful play of little lights, or an attention to a variety of tints, is to be avoided; a quietness and simplicity must reign over the whole work; to which a breadth of uniform and simple color will very much contribute. Grandeur of effect is

produced by two different ways, which seem entirely opposed to each other. One is, by reducing the colors to little more than chiaro-oscuro, which was often the practice of the Bolognian schools; and the other, by making the colors very distinct and forcible, such as we see in those of Rome and Florence; but still, the presiding principle of both those manners is simplicity. Certainly, nothing can be more simple than monotony; and the distinct blue, red, and yellow colors which are seen in the draperies of the Roman and Florentine schools, though they have not that kind of harmony which is produced by a variety of broken and transparent colors, have that effect of grandeur which was intended. Perhaps these distinct colors strike the mind more forcibly, from there not being any great union between them; as martial music, which is intended to rouse the nobler passions, has its effect from the sudden and strongly marked transitions from one note to another which that style of music requires; whilst, in that which is intended to move the softer passions, the notes imperceptibly melt into one another.

In the same manner as the historical painter never enters into the detail of colors, so neither does he debase his conceptions with minute attention to the discriminations of drapery. It is the inferior style that marks the variety of stuffs. With him, the clothing is neither wool-len, nor linen, nor silk, satin, or velvet: it is drapery; it is nothing more. The art of disposing the foldings of the drapery makes a very considerable part of the painter's study. To make it merely natural, is a mechanical operation, to which neither genius nor taste are required; whereas, it requires the nicest judgment to dispose the drapery, so that the folds shall have an easy communica-

tion, and gracefully follow each other, with such natural negligence as to look like the effect of chance, and at the same time show the figure under it to the utmost advantage.

Carlo Maratti was of opinion, that the disposition of drapery was a more difficult art than even that of drawing the human figure; that a student might be more easily taught the latter than the former; as the rules of drapery, he said, could not be so well ascertained as those for delineating a correct form. This, perhaps, is a proof how willingly we favor our own peculiar excellence. Carlo Maratti is said to have valued himself particularly upon his skill in this part of his art; yet in him, the disposition appears so ostentatiously artificial, that he is inferior to Raffaello, even in that which gave him his best claim to reputation.

Such is the great principle by which we must be directed in the nobler branches of our art. Upon this principle, the Roman, the Florentine, the Bolognese schools have formed their practice; and by this they have deservedly obtained the highest praise. These are the three great schools of the world in the epic style. The best of the French school, Poussin, Le Sueur, and Le Brun, have formed themselves upon these models, and consequently may be said, though Frenchmen, to be a colony from the Roman school. Next to these, but in a very different style of excellence, we may rank the Venetian, together with the Flemish and the Dutch schools; all professing to depart from the great purposes of painting, and catching at applause by inferior qualities.

I am not ignorant that some will censure me for placing the Venetians in this inferior class, and many of

the warmest admirers of painting will think them unjustly degraded ; but I wish not to be misunderstood. Though I can by no means allow them to hold any rank with the nobler schools of painting, they accomplished perfectly the thing they attempted. But as mere elegance is their principal object, as they seem more willing to dazzle than to affect, it can be no injury to them to suppose that their practice is useful only to its proper end. But what may heighten the elegant may degrade the sublime. There is a simplicity, and, I may add, severity, in the great manner, which is, I am afraid, almost incompatible with this comparatively sensual style.

Tintoret, Paul Veronese, and others of the Venetian school, seem to have painted with no other purpose than to be admired for their skill and expertness in the mechanism of painting, and to make a parade of that art, which, as I before observed, the higher style requires its followers to conceal.

In a conference of the French Academy, at which were present Le Brun, Sebastian Bourdon, and all the eminent Artists of that age, one of the Academicians desired to have their opinion on the conduct of Paul Veronese, who, though a painter of great consideration, had, contrary to the strict rules of art, in his picture of Perseus and Andromeda, represented the principal figure in shade. To this question no satisfactory answer was then given. But I will venture to say, that, if they had considered the class of the Artist, and ranked him as an ornamental Painter, there would have been no difficulty in answering—"It was unreasonable to expect what was never intended. His intention was solely to produce an effect of light and shadow ; every thing was to be sacrificed to that intent, and the

capricious composition of that picture suited very well with the style which he professed."

Young minds are indeed too apt to be captivated by this splendor of style; and that of the Venetians is particularly pleasing; for by them, all those parts of the Art that gave pleasure to the eye or sense, have been cultivated with care, and carried to the degree nearest to perfection. The powers exerted in the mechanical part of the Art have been called *the language of painters*; but we may say, that it is but poor eloquence which only shows that the orator can talk. Words should be employed as the means, not as the end: language is the instrument, conviction is the work.

The language of Painting must indeed be allowed these masters; but even in that, they have shown more copiousness than choice, and more luxuriancy than judgment. If we consider the uninteresting subjects of their invention, or at least the uninteresting manner in which they are treated; if we attend to their capricious composition, their violent and affected contrasts, whether of figures or of light and shadow, the richness of their drapery, and, at the same time, the mean effect which the discrimination of stuffs gives to their pictures; if to these we add their total inattention to expression; and then reflect on the conceptions and the learning of Michael Angelo, or the simplicity of Raffaele, we can no longer dwell on the comparison. Even in coloring, if we compare the quietness and chastity of the Bolognese pencil to the bustle and tumult that fills every part of a Venetian picture, without the least attempt to interest the passions, their boasted art will appear a mere struggle without effect; *a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*

Such as suppose that the great style might happily be blended with the ornamental, that the simple, grave, and majestic dignity of Raffaello could unite with the glow and bustle of a Paolo, or Tintoret, are totally mistaken. The principles by which each is attained are so contrary to each other, that they seem, in my opinion, incompatible, and as impossible to exist together, as that in the mind the most sublime ideas and the lowest sensuality should at the same time be united.

The subjects of the Venetian Painters are mostly such as give them an opportunity of introducing a great number of figures; such as feasts, marriages, and processions, public martyrdoms, or miracles. I can easily conceive that Paul Veronese, if he were asked, would say, that no subject was proper for an historical picture, but such as admitted at least forty figures; for in a less number, he would assert, there could be no opportunity of the Painter's showing his art in composition, his dexterity of managing and disposing the masses of light and groups of figures, and of introducing a variety of Eastern dresses and characters in their rich stuffs.

But the thing is very different with a pupil of the greater schools. Annibale Caracci thought twelve figures sufficient for any story; he conceived that more would contribute to no end but to fill space; that they would be but cold spectators of the general action, or, to use his own expression, that they would be *figures to let*. Besides, it is impossible for a picture composed of so many parts to have that effect so indispensably necessary to grandeur, that of one complete whole. However contradictory it may be in geometry, it is true in taste, that many little things will not make a great one. The Sublime impresses

the mind at once with one great idea; it is a single blow: the Elegant, indeed, may be produced by repetition; by an accumulation of many minute circumstances.

However great the difference is between the composition of the Venetian and the rest of the Italian schools, there is full as great a disparity in the effect of their pictures as produced by colors. And though in this respect the Venetians must be allowed extraordinary skill, yet even that skill, as they have employed it, will but ill correspond with the great style. Their coloring is not only too brilliant, but, I will venture to say, too harmonious, to produce that solidity, steadiness, and simplicity of effect, which heroic subjects require, and which simple or grave colors only can give to a work. That they are to be cautiously studied by those who are ambitious of treading the great walk of history, is confirmed, if it wants confirmation, by the greatest of all authorities, Michael Angelo. This wonderful man, after having seen a picture by Titian, told Vasari, who accompanied him,* "that he liked much his coloring and manner;" but then he added, "that it was a pity the Venetian painters did not learn to draw correctly in their youth, and adopt a better *manner of study*."

By this it appears, that the principal attention of the Venetian painters, in the opinion of Michael Angelo, seemed to be engrossed by the study of colors, to the neglect of the *ideal beauty of form*, or propriety of expression. But if general censure was given to that school from the sight of a picture of Titian, how much

* Dicendo, che molto gli piaceva il colorito suo, e la maniera; ma che era un peccato, che a Venexia non s'imparasse da principio a disegnare bene, e che non havessano que' pittori miglior modo nello studio.—Vas. tom. iii. p. 226. Vita di Tiziano.

more heavily and more justly would the censure fall on Paolo Veronese, and more especially on Tintoret? And here I can not avoid citing Vasari's opinion of the style and manner of Tintoret. "Of all the extraordinary geniuses,"* says he, "that have practised the art of painting, for wild, capricious, extravagant, and fantastical inventions, for furious impetuosity and boldness in the execution of his work, there is none like Tintoret; his strange whimsies are even beyond extravagance; and his works seems to be produced rather by chance, than in consequence of any previous design, as if he wanted to convince the world that the art was a trifle, and of the most easy attainment."

For my own part, when I speak of the Venetian painters, I wish to be understood to mean Paolo Veronese and Tintoret, to the exclusion of Titian: for though his style is not so pure as that of many other of the Italian Schools, yet there is a sort of senatorial dignity about him, which, however awkward in his imitators, seems to become him exceedingly. His portraits, alone, from the nobleness and simplicity of character which he always gave them, will entitle him to the greatest respect, as he undoubtedly stands in the first rank in this branch of the art.

It is not with Titian, but with the seducing qualities of the two former, that I could wish to caution you against being too much captivated. These are the persons who

* Nelle cose della pittura, stravagante, capriccioso, presto, e risoluto, et il piu terribile cervello, che habbia havuto mai la pittura, come si puo vedere in tutte le sue opere; e ne' componimenti delle storie, fantastiche, e fatte da lui diversamente, e fuori dell' uso degli altri pittori: anzi ha superato la stravaganza, con le nuove, e capricciose inventioni, e strani ghiribizzi del suo intelletto, che ha lavorato a caso, e senza diseg no, quasi nonstrando che quest' arte e una baia.

may be said to have exhausted all the powers of florid eloquence, to debauch the young and unexperienced: and have, without doubt, been the cause of turning off the attention of the connoisseur and of the patron of art, as well as that of the painter, from those higher excellencies of which the art is capable, and which ought to be required in every considerable production. By them, and their imitators, a style merely ornamental has been disseminated throughout all Europe. Rubens carried it to Flanders; Voet to France; and Lucca Giordano to Spain and Naples.

The Venetian is indeed the most splendid of the schools of elegance; and it is not without reason that the best performances in this lower school are valued higher than the second-rate performances of those above them; for every picture has value when it has a decided character, and is excellent in its kind. But the student must take care not to be so much dazzled with this splendor, as to be tempted to imitate what must ultimately lead from perfection. Poussin, whose eye was always steadily fixed on the sublime, has been often heard to say, "That a particular attention to coloring was an obstacle to the student, in his progress to the great end and design of the art; and that he who attaches himself to this principal end, will acquire by practice a reasonably good method of coloring."*

Though it be allowed that elaborate harmony of coloring, a brilliancy of tints, a soft and gradual transition from one to another, present to the eye, what an harmonious

* Que cette application singuliere n'etoit, qu'un obstacle pour empêcher de parvenir au veritable but de la peinture, et celui qui s'attache au principal, acquiert par la pratique une assez belle maniere de peindre.—Conference de l'Acad. Franc.

concert of music does to the ear, it must be remembered, that painting is not merely a gratification of the sight. Such excellence, though properly cultivated, where nothing higher than elegance is intended, is weak and unworthy of regard when the work aspires to grandeur and sublimity.

The same reasons that have been urged to show that a mixture of the Venetian style can not improve the great style, will hold good in regard to the Flemish and Dutch schools. Indeed the Flemish school, of which Rubens is the head, was formed upon that of the Venetian; like them, he took his figures too much from the people before him. But it must be allowed in favor of the Venetians, that he was more gross than they, and carried all their mistaken methods to a far greater excess. In the Venetian school itself, where they all err from the same cause, there is a difference in the effect. The difference between Paolo and Bassano seems to be only, that one introduced Venetian gentlemen into his pictures, and the other the boors of the district of Bassano, and called them patriarchs and prophets.

The painters of the Dutch school have still more locality. With them, a history-piece is properly a portrait of themselves; whether they describe the inside or outside of their houses, we have their own people engaged in their own peculiar occupations; working or drinking, playing or fighting. The circumstances that enter into a picture of this kind, are so far from giving a general view of human life, that they exhibit all the minute particularities of a nation differing in several respects from the rest of mankind. Yet, let them have their share of more humble praise. The painters of this school are excellent in their

own way; they are only ridiculous when they attempt general history on their own narrow principles, and debase great events by the meanness of their characters.

Some inferior dexterity, some extraordinary mechanical power is apparently that from which they seek distinction. Thus, we see, that school alone has the custom of representing candle-light not as it really appears to us by night, but red, as it would illuminate objects to a spectator by day. Such tricks, however pardonable in the little style, where petty effects are the sole end, are inexcusable in the greater, where the attention should never be drawn aside by trifles, but should be entirely occupied by the subject itself.

The same local principles which characterize the Dutch school extend even to their landscape painters; and Rubens himself, who has painted many landscapes, has sometimes transgressed in this particular. Their pieces in this way are, I think, always a representation of an individual spot, and each in its kind a very faithful but a very confined portrait. Claude Lorrain, on the contrary, was convinced, that taking nature as he found it seldom produced beauty. His pictures are a composition of the various draughts which he had previously made from various beautiful scenes and prospects. However, Rubens in some measure has made amends for the deficiency with which he is charged; he has contrived to raise and animate his otherwise uninteresting views, by introducing a rainbow, storm, or some particular accidental effect of light. That the practice of Claude Lorrain, in respect to his choice, is to be adopted by Landscape-painters in opposition to that of the Flemish and Dutch schools, there can be no doubt, as its truth is founded upon the same principle as

that by which the Historical Painter acquires perfect form. But whether landscape painting has a right to aspire so far as to reject what the painters call Accidents of Nature, is not easy to determine. It is certain Claude Lorrain seldom, if ever, availed himself of those accidents; either he thought that such peculiarities were contrary to that style of general nature which he professed, or that it would catch the attention too strongly, and destroy that quietness and repose which he thought necessary to that kind of painting.

A Portrait-painter likewise, when he attempts history, unless he is upon his guard, is likely to enter too much into the detail. He too frequently makes his historical heads look like portraits; and this was once the custom amongst those old painters, who revived the art before general ideas were practised or understood. A History-painter paints man in general; a Portrait-painter, a particular man, and consequently a defective model.

Thus an habitual practice in the lower exercises of the art will prevent many from attaining the greater. But such of us who move in these humbler walks of the profession, are not ignorant that, as the natural dignity of the subject is less, the more all the little ornamental helps are necessary to its embellishment. It would be ridiculous for a painter of domestic scenes, of portraits, landscapes, animals, or still life, to say that he despised those qualities which has made the subordinate schools so famous. The art of coloring, and the skillful management of light and shadow, are essential requisites in his confined labors. If we descend still lower, what is the painter of fruit and flowers without the utmost art in coloring, and what the painters call handling; that is, a lightness of pencil that

implies great practice, and gives the appearance of being done with ease? Some here, I believe, must remember a flower-painter whose boast it was, that he scorned to paint for the *million*: no, he professed to paint in the true Italian taste; and, despising the crowd, called strenuously upon the *few* to admire him. His idea of the Italian taste was to paint as black and dirty as he could, and to leave all clearness and brilliancy of coloring to those who were fonder of money than immortality. The consequence was such as might be expected. For these petty excellencies are here essential beauties; and without this merit the artist's work will be more short-lived than the objects of his imitation.

From what has been advanced, we must now be convinced that there are two distinct styles in history-painting; the grand, and the splendid or ornamental.

The great style stands alone, and does not require, perhaps does not so well admit, any addition from inferior beauties. The ornamental style also possesses its own peculiar merit. However, though the union of the two may make a sort of composite style, yet that style is likely to be more imperfect than either of those which go to its composition. Both kinds have merit, and may be excellent though in different ranks, if uniformity be preserved, and the general and particular ideas of nature be not mixed. Even the meanest of them is difficult enough to attain; and the first place being already occupied by the great artists in each department, some of those who followed thought there was less room for them; and feeling the impulse of ambition and the desire of novelty, and being at the same time, perhaps, willing to take the shortest way, endeavored to make for themselves a place be-

tween both. This they have effected by forming an union of the different orders. But as the grave and majestic style would suffer by an union with the florid and gay, so also has the Venetian ornament in some respect been injured by attempting an alliance with simplicity.

It may be asserted, that the great style is always more or less contaminated by any meaner mixture. But it happens in a few instances that the lower may be improved by borrowing from the grand. Thus if a portrait-painter is desirous to raise and improve his subject, he has no other means than by approaching it to a general idea. He leaves out all the minute breaks and peculiarities in the face, and changes the dress from a temporary fashion to one more permanent, which has annexed to it no ideas of meanness from its being familiar to us. But if an exact resemblance of an individual be considered as the sole object to be aimed at, the portrait-painter will be apt to lose more than he gains by the acquired dignity taken from general nature. It is very difficult to ennoble the character of a countenance but at the expense of the likeness, which is what is most generally required by such as sit to the painter.

Of those who have practised the composite style, and have succeeded in this perilous attempt, perhaps the foremost is Correggio. His style is founded upon modern grace and elegance, to which is superadded something of the simplicity of the grand style. A breadth of light and color, the general ideas of the drapery, an uninterrupted flow of outline, all conspire to this effect. Next to him, (perhaps equal to him,) Parmegiano has dignified the gentleness of modern effeminacy, by uniting it with the simplicity of the ancients and the grandeur and severity of

Michael Angelo. It must be confessed, however, that these two extraordinary men, by endeavoring to give the utmost degree of grace, have sometimes perhaps exceeded its boundaries, and have fallen into the most hateful of all hateful qualities—*affectation*. Indeed, it is the peculiar characteristic of men of genius to be afraid of coldness and insipidity, from which they think they never can be too far removed. It particularly happens to these great masters of grace and elegance. They often boldly drive on to the very verge of ridicule; the spectator is alarmed, but at the same time admires their vigor and intrepidity:—

Strange graces still, and stranger flights they had,

Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create,
As when they touch'd the brink of all we hate.

The errors of genius, however, are pardonable, and none even of the more exalted painters are wholly free from them; but they have taught us, by the rectitude of their general practice, to correct their own affected or accidental deviation. The very first have not been always upon their guard, and perhaps there is not a fault but what may take shelter under the most venerable authorities; yet that style only is perfect, in which the noblest principles are uniformly pursued; and those masters only are entitled to the first rank in our estimation who have enlarged the boundaries of their art, and have raised it to its highest dignity, by exhibiting the general ideas of nature.

On the whole, it seems to me that there is but one presiding principle which regulates and gives stability to every

art. The works, whether of poets, painters, moralists, or historians, which are built upon general nature, live for ever; while those which depend for their existence on particular customs and habits, a partial view of nature, or the fluctuation of fashion, can only be coeval with that which first raised them from obscurity. Present time and future may be considered as rivals; and he who solicits the one must expect to be discountenanced by the other.

DISCOURSE V.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1772.

Circumspection required in endeavoring to unite contrary excellencies.—The expression of a mixed passion not to be attempted.—Examples of those who excelled in the great style.—Raffaello, Michael Angelo, those two extraordinary men compared with each other.—The characteristic style.—Salvator Rosa mentioned as an example of that style; and opposed to Carlo Maratti.—Sketch of the characters of Poussin and Rubens.—These two painters entirely dissimilar, but consistent with themselves.—This consistency required in all parts of the Art.

GENTLEMEN,

I PURPOSE to carry on in this discourse the subject which I began in my last. It was my wish upon that occasion to incite you to pursue the higher excellencies of the art. But I fear that in this particular I have been misunderstood. Some are ready to imagine, when any of their favorite acquirements in the art are properly classed, that they are utterly disgraced. This is a very great mistake: nothing has its proper lustre but in its proper place. That which is most worthy of esteem in its allotted sphere, becomes an object, not of respect, but of derision, when it is forced into a higher, to which it is not suited; and there it becomes doubly a source of disorder, by occupying a situation which is not natural to it, and by putting down from the first place what is in reality of too much magnitude to become with grace and proportion that subordinate station, to which something of less value would be much better suited.

My advice, in a word, is this :—Keep your principal attention fixed upon the higher excellencies. If you compass them, and compass nothing more, you are still in the first class. We may regret the innumerable beauties which you may want; you may be very imperfect: but still you are an imperfect artist of the highest order.

If, when you have got thus far, you can add any, or all, of the subordinate qualifications, it is my wish and advice that you should not neglect them. But this is as much a matter of circumspection and caution at least, as of eagerness and pursuit.

The mind is apt to be distracted by a multiplicity of objects; and that scale of perfection which I wish always to be preserved, is in the greatest danger of being totally disordered, and even inverted.

Some excellencies bear to be united, and are improved by union; others are of a discordant nature; and the attempt to join them, only produces a harsh jarring of incongruent principles. The attempt to unite contrary excellencies (of form, for instance) in a single figure, can never escape degenerating into the monstrous, but by sinking into the insipid; by taking away its marked character, and weakening its expression.

This remark is true to a certain degree with regard to the passions. If you mean to preserve the most perfect beauty *in its most perfect state*, you can not express the passions, all of which produce distortion and deformity, more or less in the most beautiful faces.

Guido, from want of choice in adapting his subject to his ideas and his powers, or from attempting to preserve beauty where it could not be preserved, has in this respect succeeded very ill. His figures are often engaged in sub-

jects that required great expression: yet his Judith and Holofernes, the daughter of Herodias with the Baptist's head, the Andromeda, and some even of the Mothers of the Innocents, have little more expression than his Venus attired by the Graces.

Obvious as these remarks appear, there are many writers on our art, who, not being of the profession, and consequently not knowing what can or can not be done, have been very liberal of absurd praises in their descriptions of favorite works. They always find in them what they are resolved to find. They praise excellencies that can hardly exist together; and, above all things, are fond of describing, with great exactness, the expression of a mixed passion, which more particularly appears to me out of the reach of our art.

Such are many disquisitions which I have read on some of the Cartoons and other pictures of Raffaello, where the critics have described their own imaginations; or, indeed, where the excellent master himself may have attempted this expression of passions above the powers of the art, and has, therefore, by an indistinct and imperfect marking, left room for every imagination, with equal probability to find a passion of his own. What has been, and what can be done in the art, is sufficiently difficult; we need not be mortified or discouraged at not being able to execute the conceptions of a romantic imagination. Art has its boundaries, though imagination has none. We can easily, like the ancients, suppose a Jupiter to be possessed of all those powers and perfections which the subordinate deities were endowed with separately. Yet, when they employed their art to represent him, they confined his character to majesty alone. Pliny, therefore, though we are under great obli-

gations to him for the information he has given us in relation to the works of the ancient artists, is very frequently wrong when he speaks of them, which he does very often, in the style of many of our modern connoisseurs. He observes, that in a statue of Paris, by Euphranor, you might discover, at the same time, three different characters; the dignity of a Judge of the Goddesses, the Lover of Helen, and the Conqueror of Achilles. A statue, in which you endeavor to unite stately dignity, youthful elegance, and stern valor, must surely possess none of these to any eminent degree.

From hence it appears, that there is much difficulty, as well as danger, in an endeavor to concentrate, in a single subject, those various powers, which, rising from different points, naturally move in different directions.

The summit of excellence seems to be an assemblage of contrary qualities, but mixed in such proportions, that no one part is found to counteract the other. How hard this is to be attained in every art, those only know who have made the greatest progress in their respective professions.

To conclude what I have to say on this part of the subject, which I think of great importance, I wish you to understand, that I do not discourage the younger Students from the noble attempt of uniting all the excellencies of art; but suggest to them, that, beside the difficulties which attend every arduous attempt, there is a peculiar difficulty in the choice of the excellencies which ought to be united. I wish to attend to this, that you may try yourselves, whenever you are capable of that trial, what you can and what you can not do; and that, instead of dissipating your natural faculties over the immense field of possible excel-

lence, you may choose some particular walk in which you may exercise all your powers, in order that each of you may become the first in his way. If any man shall be master of such a transcendant, commanding, and ductile genius, as to enable him to rise to the highest, and to stoop to the lowest, flights of art, and to sweep over all of them, unobstructed and secure, he is fitter to give example than to receive instruction.

Having said thus much on the *union* of excellencies, I will next say something of the subordination in which various excellencies ought to be kept.

I am of opinion, that the ornamental style, which, in my discourse of last year, I cautioned you against considering as *principal*, may not be wholly unworthy the attention even of those who aim at the grand style, when it is properly placed and properly reduced.

But this study will be used with far better effect, if its principles are employed in softening the harshness and mitigating the rigor of the great style, than if it attempt to stand forward with any pretensions of its own, to positive and original excellence. It was thus Ludovico Caracci, whose example I formerly recommended to you, employed it. He was acquainted with the works both of Correggio and the Venetian painters, and knew the principles by which they produced those pleasing effects, which, at the first glance, prepossesses us so much in their favor; but he took only as much from each as would embellish, but not overpower, that manly strength and energy of style, which is his peculiar character.

Since I have already expatiated so largely in my former discourse, and in my present, upon the *styles* and *characters* of Painting, it will not be at all unsuitable to my

subject, if I mention to you some particulars relative to the leading principles, and capital works, of those who excelled in the *great style*; that I may bring you from abstraction nearer to practice, and by exemplifying the positions which I have laid down, enable you to understand more clearly what I would enforce.

The principal works of modern art are in *Fresco*, a mode of painting which excludes attention to minute elegancies: yet these works in *Fresco*, are the productions on which the fame of the greatest masters depends. Such are the pictures of Michael Angelo and Raffaelle in the Vatican; to which we may add the Cartoons; which, though not strictly to be called *Fresco*, yet may be put under that denomination; and such are the works of Giulio Romano at Mantua. If these performances were destroyed, with them would be lost the best part of the reputation of those illustrious painters; for these are justly considered as the greatest effort of our art which the world can boast. To these, therefore, we should principally direct our attention for higher excellencies. As for the lower arts, as they have been once discovered, they may be easily attained by those possessed of the former.

Raffaelle, who stands in general foremost of the first painters, owes his reputation, as I have observed, to his excellence in the higher parts of the art; his works in *Fresco*, therefore, ought to be the first object of our study and attention. His easel-works stand in a lower degree of estimation: for though he continually, to the day of his death, embellished his performances more and more with the addition of those lower ornaments, which entirely make the merit of some painters, yet he never arrived at such perfection as to make him an object of imitation. He

never was able to conquer perfectly that dryness, or even littleness of manner, which he inherited from his master. He never acquired that nicety of taste in colors, that breadth of light and shadow, that art and management of uniting light to light, and shadow to shadow, so as to make the object rise out of the ground, with the plenitude of effect so much admired in the works of Correggio. When he painted in oil, his hand seemed to be so cramped and confined, that he not only lost that facility and spirit, but I think even that correctness of form, which is so perfect and admirable in his Fresco-works. I do not recollect any pictures of his of this kind, except the Transfiguration, in which there are not some parts that appear to be even feebly drawn. That this is not a necessary attendant on Oil-painting, we have abundant instances in more modern painters. Ludovico Caracci, for instance, preserved in his works in oil the same spirit, vigor, and correctness which he had in Fresco. I have no desire to degrade Raffaele from the high rank which he deservedly holds; but by comparing him with himself, he does not appear to me to be the same man in Oil as in Fresco.

From those who have ambition to tread in this great walk of the art, Michael Angelo claims the next attention. He did not possess so many excellencies as Raffaele, but those which he had were of the highest kind. He considered the art as consisting of little more than what may be attained by sculpture; correctness of form, and energy of character. We ought not to expect more than an artist intends in his work. He never attempted those lesser elegancies and graces in the art. Vasari says, he never painted but one picture in oil, and resolved never to paint another, saying it was an employment only fit for women and children.

If any man had a right to look down upon the lower accomplishments as beneath his attention, it was certainly Michael Angelo; nor can it be thought strange, that such a mind should have slighted or have been withheld from paying due attention to all those graces and embellishments of art, which have diffused such lustre over the works of other painters.

It must be acknowledged, however, that together with these, which we wish he had more attended to, he has rejected all the false, though specious ornaments, which disgrace the works even of the most esteemed artists; and, I will venture to say, that when those higher excellencies are more known and cultivated by the artists and patrons of arts, his fame and credit will increase with our increasing knowledge. His name will then be held in the same veneration as it was in the enlightened age of Leo the Tenth: and it is remarkable that the reputation of this truly great man has been continually declining as the art itself has declined. For I must remark to you, that it has long been much on the decline, and that our only hope of its revival will consist in your being thoroughly sensible of its deprivation and decay. It is to Michael Angelo that we owe even the existence of Raffaele; it is to him that Raffaele owes the grandeur of his style. He was taught by him to elevate his thoughts, and to conceive his subjects with dignity. His genius, however, formed to blaze and shine, might, like fire in combustible matter, for ever have lain dormant, if it had not caught a spark by its contact with Michael Angelo; and though it never burst out with his extraordinary heat and vehemence, yet it must be acknowledged to be a more pure, regular, and chaste flame. Though our judgment must, upon the whole, decide in

favor of Raffaele, yet he never takes such a firm hold and entire possession of the mind as to make us desire nothing else, and to feel nothing wanting. The effect of the capital works of Michael Angelo perfectly corresponds to what Bouchardon said he felt from reading Homer; his whole frame appeared to himself to be enlarged, and all nature which surrounded him, diminished to atoms.

If we put these great artists in a light of comparison with each other, Raffaele had more Taste and Fancy; Michael Angelo, more Genius and Imagination. The one excelled in beauty, the other in energy. Michael Angelo has more of the poetical Inspiration; his ideas are vast and sublime; his people are a superior order of beings; there is nothing about them, nothing in the air of their actions, or their attitudes, or the style and cast of their limbs or features, that reminds us of their belonging to our own species. Raffaele's imagination is not so elevated; his figures are not so much disjoined from our own diminutive race of beings, though his ideas are chaste, noble, and of great conformity to their subjects. Michael Angelo's works have a strong, peculiar, and marked character; they seem to proceed from his own mind entirely, and that mind so rich and abundant, that he never needed, or seemed to disdain, to look abroad for foreign help. Raffaele's materials are generally borrowed, though the noble structure is his own. The excellency of this extraordinary man lay in the propriety, beauty, and majesty of his characters, the judicious contrivance of his Composition, his correctness of Drawing, purity of Taste, and skillful accommodation of other men's conceptions to his own purpose. Nobody excelled him in that judgment, with which he united to his own observations on Nature,

the energy of Michael Angelo, and the Beauty and Simplicity of the Antique. To the question, therefore, which ought to hold the first rank, Raffaele or Michael Angelo, it must be answered, that if it is to be given to him who possessed a greater combination of the higher qualities of the art than any other man, there is no doubt but Raffaele is the first. But if, as Longinus thinks, the sublime, being the highest excellence that human composition can attain to, abundantly compensates the absence of every other beauty, and atones for all other deficiencies, then Michael Angelo demands the preference.

These two extraordinary men carried some of the higher excellencies of the art to a greater degree of perfection than probably they ever arrived at before. They certainly have not been excelled, nor equalled since. Many of their successors were induced to leave this great road as a beaten path, endeavoring to surprise and please by something uncommon or new. When this desire of novelty has proceeded from mere idleness or caprice, it is not worth the trouble of criticism; but when it has been the result of a busy mind of a peculiar complexion, it is always striking and interesting, never insipid.

Such is the great style, as it appears in those who possessed it at its height: in this, search after novelty, in conception or in treating the subject, has no place.

But there is another style, which, though inferior to the former, has still great merit, because it shows that those who cultivated it were men of lively and vigorous imagination. This, which may be called the original or characteristical style, being less referred to any true archetype existing either in general or particular nature, must be supported by the painter's consistency in the principles

which he has assumed, and in the union and harmony of his whole design. The excellency of every style, but of the subordinate styles more especially, will very much depend on preserving that union and harmony between all the component parts, that they may appear to hang well together, as if the whole proceeded from one mind. It is in the works of art as in the characters of men. The faults or defects of some men seem to become them, when they appear to be the natural growth, and of a piece with the rest of their character. A faithful picture of a mind, though it be not of the most elevated kind, though it be irregular, wild, and incorrect, yet if it be marked with that spirit and firmness which characterize works of genius, will claim attention, and be more striking than a combination of excellencies that do not seem to unite well together; or we may say, than a work that possesses even all excellencies, but those in a moderate degree.

One of the strongest-marked characters of this kind, which must be allowed to be subordinate to the great style, is that of Salvator Rosa. He gives us a peculiar cast of nature, which, though void of all grace, elegance, and simplicity, though it has nothing of that elevation and dignity which belongs to the grand style, yet has that sort of dignity which belongs to savage and uncultivated nature: but what is most to be admired in him, is the perfect correspondence which he observed between the subjects which he chose, and his manner of treating them. Every thing is of a piece: his Rocks, Trees, Sky, even to his handling, have the same rude and wild character which animates his figures.

With him we may contrast the character of Carlo Maratti, who, in my opinion, had no great vigor of mind

or strength of original genius. He rarely seizes the imagination by exhibiting the higher excellencies, nor does he captivate us by that originality which attends the painter who thinks for himself. He knew and practised all the rules of art, and from a composition of Raffaele, Caracci, and Guido, made up a style, of which the only fault was, that it had no manifest defects and no striking beauties; and that the principles of his composition are never blended together so as to form one uniform body original in its kind, or excellent in any view.

I will mention two other painters, who, though entirely dissimilar, yet by being each consistent with himself, and possessing a manner entirely his own, have both gained reputation, though for very opposite accomplishments. The painters I mean are Rubens and Poussin. Rubens I mention in this place, as I think him a remarkable instance of the same mind being seen in all the various parts of the art. The whole is so much of a piece, that one can scarce be brought to believe but that if any one of the qualities he possessed had been more correct and perfect, his works would not have been so complete as they now appear. If we should allow him a greater purity and correctness of Drawing, his want of Simplicity in Composition, Coloring, and Drapery, would appear more gross.

In his Composition his art is too apparent. His figures have expression, and act with energy, but without simplicity or dignity. His coloring, in which he is eminently skilled, is notwithstanding too much of what we call tinted. Throughout the whole of his works, there is a proportionable want of that nicety of distinction and elegance of mind, which is required in the higher walks of painting: and to this want it may be in some degree

ascribed, that those qualities which make the excellency of this subordinate style appear in him with their greatest lustre. Indeed the facility with which he invented, the richness of his composition, the luxuriant harmony and brilliancy of his coloring, so dazzle the eye, that whilst his works continue before us, we cannot help thinking that all his deficiencies are fully supplied.*

Opposed to this florid, careless, loose, and inaccurate style, that of the simple, careful, pure, and correct style of Poussin, seems to be a complete contrast. Yet however opposite their characters, in one thing they agreed; both of them always preserving a perfect correspondence between all the parts of their respective manners; insomuch that it may be doubted whether any alteration of what is considered as defective in either, would not destroy the effect of the whole.

Poussin lived and conversed with the ancient statues so long, that he may be said to have been better acquainted with them than with the people who were about him. I have often thought that he carried his veneration for them so far as to wish to give his works the air of Ancient Paintings. It is certain he copied some of the Antique Paintings, particularly the Marriage in the Aldobrandini Palace at Rome, which I believe to be the best relic of those remote ages that has yet been found.

No works of any modern have so much the air of Antique Painting as those of Poussin. His best performances have a remarkable dryness of manner, which though by no means to be recommended for imitation, yet seems perfectly correspondent to that ancient simplicity which

*A more detailed character of Rubens may be found in the "Journey to Flanders and Holland," near the conclusion.—M

distinguishes his style. Like Polidoro he studied the ancients so much that he acquired a habit of thinking in their way, and seemed to know perfectly the actions and gestures they would use on every occasion.

Poussin in the latter part of his life changed from his dry manner to one much softer and richer, where there is a greater union between the figures and ground; as in the Seven Sacraments in the Duke of Orleans's collection; but neither these, or any of his other pictures in this manner, are at all comparable to many in this dry manner which we have in England.

The favorite subjects of Poussin were Ancient Fables; and no painter was ever better qualified to paint such subjects, not only from his being eminently skilled in the knowledge of the ceremonies, customs, and habits of the Ancients, but from his being so well acquainted with the different characters which those who invented them gave to their allegorical figures. Though Rubens has shown great fancy in his Satyrs, Silenuses, and Fauns, yet they are not that distinct, separate class of beings, which is carefully exhibited by the Ancients, and by Poussin. Certainly, when such subjects of antiquity are represented, nothing in the picture ought to remind us of modern times. The mind is thrown back into antiquity, and nothing ought to be introduced that may tend to awaken it from the illusion.

Poussin seemed to think that the style and the language in which such stories are told, is not the worse for preserving some relish of the old way of painting, which seemed to give a general uniformity to the whole, so that the mind was thrown back into antiquity not only by the subject, but the execution.

If Poussin, in imitation of the Ancients, represents

Apollo driving his chariot out of the sea by way of representing the Sun rising, if he personifies Lakes and Rivers, it is nowise offensive in him; but seems perfectly of a piece with the general air of the picture. On the contrary, if the figures which people his pictures had a modern air or countenance, if they appeared like our countrymen, if the draperies were like cloth or silk of our manufacture, if the landscape had the appearance of a modern view, how ridiculous would Apollo appear instead of the Sun; and an old Man, or a nymph with an urn, to represent a River or a Lake?

I can not avoid mentioning here a circumstance in portrait-painting, which may help to confirm what has been said. When a portrait is painted in the Historical Style, as it is neither an exact minute representation of an individual, nor completely ideal, every circumstance ought to correspond to this mixture. The simplicity of the antique air and attitude, however much to be admired, is ridiculous when joined to a figure in a modern dress. It is not to my purpose to enter into the question at present, whether this mixed style ought to be adopted or not; yet if it is chosen, it is necessary it should be complete, and all of a piece; the difference of stuffs, for instance, which make the clothing, should be distinguished in the same degree as the head deviates from a general idea. Without this union, which I have so often recommended, a work can have no marked and determined character, which is the peculiar and constant evidence of genius. But when this is accomplished to a high degree, it becomes in some sort a rival to that style which we have fixed as the highest.

Thus I have given a sketch of the characters of Rubens and Salvator Rosa, as they appear to me to have the

greatest uniformity of mind throughout their whole work. But we may add to these, all those Artists who are at the head of a class, and have had a school of imitators from Michael Angelo down to Watteau. Upon the whole it appears that, setting aside the Ornamental Style, there are two different modes, either of which a Student may adopt without degrading the dignity of his art. The object of the first, is to combine the higher excellencies and embellish them to the greatest advantage: of the other, to carry one of these excellencies to the highest degree. But those who possess neither, must be classed with them, who, as Shakspeare says, are *men of no mark or likelihood*.

I inculcate as frequently as I can your forming yourselves upon great principles and great models. Your time will be much mis-spent in every other pursuit. Small excellencies should be viewed, not studied; they ought to be viewed, because nothing ought to escape a Painter's observation: but for no other reason.

There is another caution which I wish to give you. Be as select in those whom you endeavor to please, as in those whom you endeavor to imitate. Without the love of fame you can never do any thing excellent: but by an excessive and undistinguishing thirst after it, you will come to have vulgar views; you will degrade your style; and your taste will be entirely corrupted. It is certain that the lowest style will be the most popular, as it falls within the compass of ignorance itself; and the Vulgar will always be pleased with what is natural, in the confined and misunderstood sense of the word.

One would wish that such depravation of taste should be counteracted with that manly pride which actuated Euripides when he said to the Athenians who criticised

his works, "I do not compose my works in order to be corrected by you, but to instruct you." It is true, to have a right to speak thus, a man must be an Euripides. However, thus much may be allowed, that when an Artist is sure that he is upon firm ground, supported by the authority and practice of his predecessors of the greatest reputation, he may then assume the boldness and intrepidity of genius ; at any rate he must not be tempted out of the right path by any allurements of popularity, which always accompanies the lower styles of painting.

I mention this, because our Exhibitions, while they produce such admirable effects by nourishing emulation, and calling out genius, have also a mischievous tendency, by seducing the Painter to an ambition of pleasing indiscriminately the mixed multitude of people who resort to them.

DISCOURSE VI.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1774.

Imitation.—Genius begins where rules end.—Invention: acquired by being conversant with the inventions of others.—The true method of imitating.—Borrowing—how far allowable.—Something to be gathered from every school.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN I have taken the liberty of addressing you on the course and order of your studies, I never proposed to enter into a minute detail of the art. This I have always left to the several Professors, who pursue the end of our Institution with the highest honor to themselves, and with the greatest advantage to the Students.

My purpose in the discourses I have held in the Academy has been to lay down certain general positions, which seem to me proper for the formation of a sound taste: principles necessary to guard the pupils against those errors into which the sanguine temper common to their time of life has a tendency to lead them: and which have rendered abortive the hopes of so many successions of promising young men in all parts of Europe. I wished also, to intercept and suppress those prejudices which particularly prevail when the mechanism of painting is come to its perfection; and which, when they do prevail, are certain utterly to destroy the higher and more valuable parts of this literate and liberal profession.

These two have been my principal purposes; they are still as much my concern as ever; and if I repeat my own

notions on the subject, you who know how fast mistake and prejudice, when neglected, gain ground upon truth and reason, will easily excuse me. I only attempt to set the same thing in the greatest variety of lights.

The subject of this discourse will be *IMITATION*, as far as a painter is concerned in it. By imitation, I do not mean imitation in its largest sense, but simply the following of other masters, and the advantage to be drawn from the study of their works.

Those who have undertaken to write on our art, and have represented it as a kind of *inspiration*, as a *gift* bestowed upon peculiar favorites at their birth, seem to insure a much more favorable disposition from their readers, and have a much more captivating and liberal air, than he who attempts to examine, coldly, whether there are any means by which this art may be acquired; how the mind may be strengthened and expanded, and what guides will show the way to eminence.

It is very natural for those who are unacquainted with the *cause* of any thing extraordinary, to be astonished at the *effect*, and to consider it as a kind of magic. They, who have never observed the gradation by which art is acquired; who see only what is the full result of long labor and application of an infinite number and infinite variety of acts, are apt to conclude, from their entire inability to do the same at once, that it is not only inaccessible to themselves, but can be done by those only who have some gift of the nature of inspiration bestowed upon them.

The travellers into the East tell us, that when the ignorant inhabitants of those countries are asked concerning the ruins of stately edifices yet remaining amongst them, the melancholy monuments of their former grandeur and

long-lost science, they always answer, that they were built by magicians. The untaught mind finds a vast gulf between its own powers and those works of complicated art, which it is utterly unable to fathom; and it supposes that such a void can be passed only by supernatural powers.

And, as for artists themselves, it is by no means their interest to undeceive such judges, however conscious they may be of the very natural means by which their extraordinary powers were acquired; though our art, being intrinsically imitative, rejects this idea of inspiration, more perhaps than any other.

It is to avoid this plain confession of the truth, as it should seem, that this imitation of masters, indeed almost all imitation, which implies a more regular and progressive method of attaining the ends of painting, has ever been particularly inveighed against with great keenness, both by ancient and modern writers.

To derive all from native power, to owe nothing to another, is the praise which men who do not much think on what they are saying, bestow sometimes upon others, and sometimes on themselves; and their imaginary dignity is naturally heightened by a supercilious censure of the low, the barren, the groveling, the servile imitator. It would be no wonder if a Student, frightened by these terrific and disgraceful epithets, with which the poor imitators are so often loaded, should let fall his pencil in mere despair; conscious as he must be, how much he has been indebted to the labors of others, how little, how very little of his art was born with him; and consider it as hopeless, to set about acquiring by the imitation of any human master, what he is taught to suppose is matter of inspiration from heaven.

Some allowance must be made for what is said in the gaiety of rhetoric. We can not suppose that any one can really mean to exclude all imitation of others. A position so wild would scarce deserve a serious answer; for it is apparent, if we were forbid to make use of the advantages which our predecessors afford us, the art would be always to begin, and consequently remain always in its infant state; and it is a common observation, that no art was ever invented and carried to perfection at the same time.

But to bring us entirely to reason and sobriety, let it be observed, that a painter must not only be of necessity an imitator of the works of nature, which alone is sufficient to dispel this phantom of inspiration, but he must be as necessarily an imitator of the works of other painters: this appears more humiliating, but is equally true; and no man can be an artist, whatever he may suppose, upon any other terms.

However, those who appear more moderate and reasonable, allow, that our study is to begin by imitation; but maintain that we should no longer use the thoughts of our predecessors, when we are become able to think for ourselves. They hold that imitation is as hurtful to the more advanced student, as it was advantageous to the beginner.

For my own part, I confess, I am not only very much disposed to maintain the absolute necessity of imitation in the first stages of the art; but am of opinion, that the study of other masters, which I here call imitation, may be extended throughout our whole lives, without any danger of the inconveniences with which it is charged, of enfeebling the mind, or preventing us from giving that original air which every work undoubtedly ought always to have.

I am on the contrary persuaded that by imitation only,

variety, and even originality of invention, is produced. I will go further; even genius, at least what generally is so called, is the child of imitation. But as this appears to be contrary to the general opinion, I must explain my position before I enforce it.

Genius is supposed to be a power of producing excellencies, which are out of the reach of the rules of art; a power which no precepts can teach, and which no industry can acquire.

This opinion of the impossibility of acquiring those beauties, which stamp the work with the character of genius, supposes that it is something more fixed, than in reality it is; and that we always do, and ever did agree in opinion, with respect to what should be considered as the characteristic of genius. But the truth is, that the *degree* of excellence which proclaims *Genius* is different, in different times and different places; and what shows it to be so is, that mankind have often changed their opinion upon this matter.

When the Arts were in their infancy, the power of merely drawing the likeness of any object, was considered as one of its greatest efforts. The common people, ignorant of the principles of art, talk the same language even to this day. But when it was found that every man could be taught to do this, and a great deal more, merely by the observance of certain precepts; the name of Genius then shifted its application, and was given only to him who added the peculiar character of the object he represented; to him who had invention, expression, grace, or dignity; in short, those qualities, or excellencies, the power of producing which, could not *then* be taught by any known and promulgated rules.

We are very sure that the beauty of form, the expression of the passions, the art of composition, even the power of giving a general air of grandeur to a work, is at present very much under the dominion of rules. These excellencies were, heretofore, considered merely as the effects of genius : and justly, if genius is not taken for inspiration, but as the effect of close observation and experience.

He who first made any of these observations, and digested them, so as to form an invariable principle for himself to work by, had that merit, but probably no one went very far at once ; and generally, the first who gave the hint, did not know how to pursue it steadily and methodically ; at least not in the beginning. He himself worked on it, and improved it ; others worked more, and improved further ; until the secret was discovered, and the practice made as general as refined practice can be made. How many more principles may be fixed and ascertained, we can not tell ; but as criticism is likely to go hand in hand with the art which is its subject, we may venture to say, that as that art shall advance, its powers will be still more and more fixed by rules.

But by whatever strides criticism may gain ground, we need be under no apprehension that invention will ever be annihilated, or subdued ; or intellectual energy be brought entirely within the restraint of written law. Genius will still have room enough to expatiate, and keep always at the same distance from narrow comprehension and mechanical performance.

What we now call Genius, begins, not where rules, abstractedly taken, end ; but where known vulgar and trite rules have no longer any place. It must of necessity be, that even works of Genius, like every other effect, as they

must have their cause, must likewise have their rules: it can not be by chance, that excellencies are produced with any constancy or any certainty, for this is not the nature of chance; but the rules by which men of extraordinary parts, and such as are called men of Genius, work, are either such as they discover by their own peculiar observations, or of such a nice texture as not easily to admit being expressed in words; especially as artists are not very frequently skillful in that mode of communicating ideas. Unsubstantial, however, as these rules may seem, and difficult as it may be to convey them in writing, they are still seen and felt in the mind of the artist; and he works from them with as much certainty, as if they were embodied, as I may say, upon paper. It is true, these refined principles can not be always made palpable, like the more gross rules of art; yet it does not follow, but that the mind may be put in such a train, that it shall perceive, by a kind of scientific sense, that propriety, which words, particularly words of unpractised writers, such as we are, can but very feebly suggest.

Invention is one of the great marks of genius: but if we consult experience, we shall find, that it is by being conversant with the inventions of others, that we learn to invent; as by reading the thoughts of others we learn to think.

Whoever has so far formed his taste, as to be able to relish and feel the beauties of the great masters, has gone a great way in his study; for, merely from a consciousness of this relish of the right, the mind swells with an inward pride, and is almost as powerfully affected, as if it had itself produced what it admires. Our hearts, frequently warmed in this manner by the contact of those whom we

wish to resemble, will undoubtedly catch something of their way of thinking; and we shall receive in our own bosoms some radiation at least of their fire and splendor. That disposition, which is so strong in children, still continues with us, of catching involuntarily the general air and manner of those with whom we are most conversant; with this difference only, that a young mind is naturally pliable and imitative; but in a more advanced state it grows rigid, and must be warmed and softened, before it will receive a deep impression.

From these considerations, which a little of your own reflection will carry a great way further, it appears, of what great consequence it is, that our minds should be habituated to the contemplation of excellence; and that, far from being contented to make such habits the discipline of our youth only, we should, to the last moment of our lives, continue a settled intercourse with all the true examples of grandeur. Their inventions are not only the food of our infancy, but the substance which supplies the fullest maturity of our vigor.

The mind is but a barren soil; a soil which is soon exhausted, and will produce no crop, or only one, unless it be continually fertilized and enriched with foreign matter.

When we have had continually before us the great works of Art to impregnate our minds with kindred ideas, we are then, and not till then, fit to produce something of the same species. We behold all about us with the eyes of those penetrating observers whose works we contemplate; and our minds, accustomed to think the thoughts of the noblest and brightest intellects, are prepared for the discovery and selection of all that is great and noble in nature. The greatest natural genius can not subsist on its

own stock : he who resolves never to ransack any mind but his own, will be soon reduced, from mere barrenness, to the poorest of all imitations ; he will be obliged to imitate himself, and to repeat what he has before often repeated. When we know the subject designed by such men, it will never be difficult to guess what kind of work is to be produced.

It is vain for painters or poets to endeavor to invent without materials on which the mind may work, and from which invention must originate. Nothing can come of nothing.

Homer is supposed to be possessed of all the learning of his time ; and we are certain that Michael Angelo, and Raffaëlle, were equally possessed of all the knowledge in the art which had been discovered in the works of their predecessors.

A mind enriched by an assemblage of all the treasures of ancient and modern art, will be more elevated and fruitful in resources, in proportion to the number of ideas which have been carefully collected and thoroughly digested. There can be no doubt but that he who has the most materials has the greatest means of invention ; and if he has not the power of using them, it must proceed from a feebleness of intellect ; or from the confused manner in which those collections have been laid up in his mind.

The addition of other men's judgment is so far from weakening our own, as is the opinion of many, that it will fashion and consolidate those ideas of excellence which lay in embryo, feeble, ill-shaped, and confused, but which are finished and put in order by the authority and practice of those whose works may be said to have been consecrated by having stood the test of ages.

The mind, or genius, has been compared to a spark of fire, which is smothered by a heap of fuel, and prevented from blazing into a flame. This simile, which is made use of by the younger Pliny, may be easily mistaken for argument or proof. But there is no danger of the mind's being over-burthened with knowledge, or the genius extinguished by any addition of images; on the contrary, these acquisitions may as well, perhaps better, be compared, if comparisons signified any thing in reasoning, to the supply of living embers, which will contribute to strengthen the spark, that without the association of more fuel would have died away. The truth is, he whose feebleness is such, as to make other men's thoughts an incumbrance to him, can have no very great strength of mind or genius of his own to be destroyed; so that not much harm will be done at worst.

We may oppose to Pliny the greater authority of Cicero, who is continually enforcing the necessity of this method of study. In his dialogue on Oratory, he makes Crassus say, that one of the first and most important precepts is, to choose a proper model for our imitation. *Hoc sit primum in præceptis meis, ut demonstremus quem imitemur.*

When I speak of the habitual imitation and continued study of masters, it is not to be understood that I advise any endeavor to copy the exact peculiar color and complexion of another man's mind; the success of such an attempt must always be like his, who imitates exactly the air, manner, and gestures of him whom he admires. His model may be excellent, but the copy will be ridiculous: this ridicule does not arise from his having imitated, but from his not having chosen the right mode of imitation.

It is a necessary and warrantable pride to disdain to

walk servilely behind any individual, however elevated his rank. The true and liberal ground of imitation is an open field; where, though he who precedes has had the advantage of starting before you, you may always propose to overtake him: it is enough, however, to pursue his course; you need not tread in his footsteps, and you certainly have a right to ourstrip him if you can.

Nor whilst I recommend studying the art from artists, can I be supposed to mean that nature is to be neglected; I take this study in aid, and not in exclusion of the other. Nature is and must be the fountain which alone is inexhaustible, and from which all excellencies must originally flow.

The great use of studying our predecessors is, to open the mind, to shorten our labor, and to give us the result of the selection made by those great minds of what is grand or beautiful in nature; her rich stores are all spread out before us; but it is an art, and no easy art, to know how or what to choose, and how to attain and secure the object of our choice. Thus the highest beauty of form must be taken from nature; but it is an art of long deduction and great experience to know how to find it. We must not content ourselves with merely admiring and relishing; we must enter into the principles on which the work is wrought: these do not swim on the superficies, and consequently are not open to superficial observers.

Art in its perfection is not ostentatious; it lies hid and works its effect itself unseen. It is the proper study and labor of an artist to uncover and find out the latent cause of conspicuous beauties, and from thence form principles of his own conduct; such an examination is a continual exertion of the mind; as great, perhaps, as that of the artist whose works he is thus studying.

The sagacious imitator does not content himself with merely remarking what distinguishes the different manner or genius of each master; he enters into the contrivance in the composition how the masses of lights are disposed, the means by which the effect is produced, how artfully some parts are lost in the ground, others boldly relieved, and how all these are mutually altered and interchanged according to the reason and scheme of the work. He admires not the harmony of coloring alone, but examines by what artifice one color is a foil to its neighbor. He looks close into the tints, examines of what colors they are composed, till he has formed clear and distinct ideas, and has learnt to see in what harmony and good coloring consists. What is learnt in this manner from the works of others becomes really our own, sinks deep, and is never forgotten; nay, it is by seizing on this clue that we proceed forward, and get further and further in enlarging the principles and improving the practice of our art.

There can be no doubt but the art is better learnt from the works themselves, than from the precepts which are formed upon those works; but if it is difficult to choose proper models for imitation, it requires no less circumspection to separate and distinguish what in those models we ought to imitate.

I can not avoid mentioning here, though it is not my intention at present to enter into the art and method of study, an error which Students are too apt to fall into. He that is forming himself, must look with great caution and wariness on those peculiarities, or prominent parts, which at first force themselves upon view; and are the marks, or what is commonly called the manner, by which that individual artist is distinguished.

Peculiar marks I hold to be, generally, if not always, defects; however difficult it may be wholly to escape them.

Peculiarities in the works of art are like those in the human figure; it is by them that we are cognizable, and distinguished one from another, but they are always so many blemishes; which, however, both in real life and in painting, cease to appear deformities to those who have them continually before their eyes. In the works of art, even the most enlightened mind, when warmed by beauties of the highest kind, will by degrees find a repugnance within him to acknowledge any defects; nay, his enthusiasm will carry him so far, as to transform them into beauties and objects of imitation.

It must be acknowledged that a peculiarity of style, either from its novelty or by seeming to proceed from a peculiar turn of mind, often escapes blame; on the contrary, it is sometimes striking and pleasing; but this it is a vain labor to endeavor to imitate, because novelty and peculiarity being its only merit, when it ceases to be new it ceases to have value.

A manner, therefore, being a defect, and every painter, however excellent, having a manner, it seems to follow that all kinds of faults, as well as beauties, may be learned under the sanction of the greatest authorities. Even the great name of Michael Angelo may be used, to keep in countenance a deficiency, or rather neglect, of coloring, and every other ornamental part of the art. If the young Student is dry and hard, Poussin is the same. If his work has a careless and unfinished air, he has most of the Venetian schools to support him. If he makes no selection of objects, but takes individual nature just as he finds it, he is like Rembrandt. If he is incorrect in the proportions

of his figures, Correggio was likewise incorrect. If his colors are not blended and united, Rubens was equally erude. In short, there is no defect that may not be excused, if it is a sufficient excuse that it can be imputed to considerable artists; but it must be remembered, that it was not by these defects they acquired their reputation; they have a right to our pardon, but not to our admiration.

However, to imitate peculiarities, or mistake defects for beauties, that man will be most liable, who confines his imitation to one favorite master; and even though he chooses the best, and is capable of distinguishing the real excellencies of his model, it is not by such narrow practice that a genius or mastery in the art is acquired. A man is as little likely to form a true idea of the perfection of the art by studying a single artist, as he would be to produce a perfectly beautiful figure, by an exact imitation of any individual living model. And as the painter, by bringing together in one piece those beauties which are dispersed among a great variety of individuals, produces a figure more beautiful than can be found in nature, so that artist who can unite in himself the excellencies of the various great painters, will approach nearer to perfection than any one of his masters. He who confines himself to the imitation of an individual, as he never proposes to surpass, so he is not likely to equal, the object of his imitation. He professes only to follow; and he that follows must necessarily be behind.

We should imitate the conduct of the great artists in the course of their studies, as well as the works which they produced, when they were perfectly formed. Raffaele began by imitating implicitly the manner of Pietro Perugino, under whom he studied; hence his first works

are scarce to be distinguished from his master's; but soon forming higher and more extensive views, he imitated the grand outline of Michael Angelo; he learned the manner of using colors from the works of Leonardo da Vinci, and Fratre Bartolomeo: to all this he added the contemplation of all the remains of antiquity that were within his reach, and employed others to draw for him what was in Greece and distant places. And it is from his having taken so many models, that he became himself a model for all succeeding painters; always imitating, and always original.

If your ambition, therefore, be to equal Raffaele, you must do as Raffaele did, take many models, and not even *him* for your guide alone, to the exclusion of others.* And yet the number is infinite of those who seem, if one may judge by their style, to have seen no other works but those of their master, or of some favorite, whose *manner* is their first wish, and their last.

I will mention a few that occur to me of this narrow, confined, illiberal, unscientific, and servile kind of imitators. Guido was thus meanly copied by Elizabetta, Sirani, and Simone Cantarini; Poussin, by Verdier, and Cheron; Parmegiano, by Jeronimo Mazzuoli. Paolo Veronese, and Iacomo Bassan, had for their imitators their brothers and sons. Pietro da Cortona was followed by Ciro Ferri, and Romanelli; Rubens, by Jacques Jordaens, and Diepenbeke; Guercino, by his own family, the Genari. Carlo Maratti was imitated by Giuseppe Chiari, and Pietro de Pietri; and Rembrandt, by Bramer, Eeckhout, and Flink. All these, to whom may be added a much longer list of painters, whose works among the ignorant

* Sed non qui maxime imitandus, etiam solus imitandus est.—Quintilian.

pass for those of their masters, are justly to be censured for barrenness and servility.

To oppose to this list a few that have adopted a more liberal style of imitation;—Pellegrino Tibaldi Rosso, and Primaticcio, did not coldly imitate, but caught something of the fire that animates the works of Michael Angelo. The Caraccis formed their style from Pellegrino Tibaldi, Correggio, and the Venetian school. Domenichino, Guido, Lanfranco, Albano, Guercino, Cavidone, Schidone, Tiarini, though it is sufficiently apparent that they came from the school of the Caraccis, have yet the appearance of men who extended their views beyond the model that lay before them, and have shown that they had opinions of their own, and thought for themselves, after they had made themselves masters of the general principles of their schools.

Le Sueur's first manner resembles very much that of his master Vouet; but as he soon excelled him, so he differed from him in every part of the art. Carlo Maratti succeeded better than those I have first named, and I think owes his superiority to the extension of his views; beside his master Andrea Sacchi, he imitated Raffaele, Guido, and the Caraccis. It is true, there is nothing very captivating in Carlo Maratti; but this proceeded from a want which can not be completely supplied; that is, want of strength of parts. In this certainly men are not equal; and a man can bring home wares only in proportion to the capital with which he goes to market. Carlo, by diligence, made the most of what he had; but there was undoubtedly a heaviness about him, which extended itself, uniformly, to his invention, expression, his drawing, coloring, and the general effect of his pictures. The truth is, he never

equalled any of his patterns in any one thing and he added little of his own.

But we must not rest contented even in this general study of the moderns; we must trace back the art to its fountain-head; to that source from whence they drew their principal excellencies, the monuments of pure antiquity. All the inventions and thoughts of the ancients, whether conveyed to us in statues, bas-reliefs, intaglios, cameos, or coins, are to be sought after and carefully studied; the genius that hovers over these venerable relics may be called the father of modern art.

From the remains of the works of the ancients the modern arts were revived, and it is by their means that they must be restored a second time. However it may mortify our vanity, we must be forced to allow them our masters: and we may venture to prophesy, that when they shall cease to be studied, arts will no longer flourish, and we shall again relapse into barbarism.

The fire of the artist's own genius operating upon these materials which have been thus diligently collected, will enable him to make new combinations, perhaps, superior to what had ever before been in the possession of the art; as in the mixture of the variety of metals, which are said to have been melted and run together at the burning of Corinth, a new and till then unknown metal was produced, equal in value to any of those that had contributed to its composition. And though a curious refiner should come with his crucibles, analyze and separate its various component parts, yet Corinthian brass would still hold its rank amongst the most beautiful and valuable of metals.

We have hitherto considered the advantages of imitation as it tends to form the taste, and as a practice by

which a spark of that genius may be caught, which illumines those noble works that ought always to be present to our thoughts.

We come now to speak of another kind of imitation ; the borrowing a particular thought, an action, attitude, or figure, and transplanting it into your own work, this will either come under the charge of plagiarism, or be warrantable, and deserve commendation, according to the address with which it is performed. There is some difference, likewise, whether it is upon the ancients or moderns that these depredations are made. It is generally allowed, that no man need be ashamed of copying the ancients ; their works are considered as a magazine of common property, always open to the public, whence every man has a right to take what materials he pleases ; and if he has the art of using them, they are supposed to become to all intents and purposes his own property. The collection of the thoughts of the ancients which Raffaello made with so much trouble, is a proof of his opinion on this subject. Such collections may be made with much more ease, by means of an art scarce known in his time ; I mean that of engraving ; by which, at an easy rate, every man may now avail himself of the inventions of antiquity.

It must be acknowledged that the works of the moderns are more the property of their authors. He who borrows an idea from an ancient, or even from a modern artist not his contemporary, and so accommodates it to his own work, that it makes a part of it, with no seam or joining appearing, can hardly be charged with plagiarism ; poets practise this kind of borrowing without reserve. But an artist should not be contented with this only ; he should enter into a competition with his original, and endeavor to

improve what he is appropriating to his own work. Such imitation is so far from having any thing in it of the servility of plagiarism, that it is a perpetual exercise of the mind, a continual invention. Borrowing or stealing with such art and caution, will have a right to the same lenity as was used by the Lacedemonians; who did not punish theft, but the want of artifice to conceal it.

In order to encourage you to imitation, to the utmost extent, let me add, that very finished artists in the inferior branches of the art, will contribute to furnish the mind and give hints, of which a skillful painter, who is sensible of what he wants, and is in no danger of being infected by the contact of vicious models, will know how to avail himself. He will pick up from dunghills what, by a nice chemistry, passing through his own mind, shall be converted into pure gold; and under the rudeness of Gothic essays, he will find original, rational, and even sublime inventions.

The works of Albert Dürer, Lucas Van Leyden, the numerous inventions of Tobias Stimmer, and Jost Ammon, afford a rich mass of genuine materials, which, wrought up, and polished to elegance, will add to what, perhaps, without such aid, could have aspired only to justness and propriety.

In the luxuriant style of Paul Veronese, in the capricious compositions of Tintoret, he will find something, that will assist his invention, and give points, from which his own imagination shall rise and take flight, when the subject which he treats will with propriety admit of splendid effects.

In every school, whether Venetian, French, or Dutch, he will find either ingenious compositions, extraordinary

effects, some peculiar expressions, or some mechanical excellence, well worthy of his attention, and, in some measure, of his imitation. Even in the lower class of the French painters, great beauties are often found, united with great defects. Though Coypel wanted a simplicity of taste, and mistook a presumptuous and assuming air, for what is grand and majestic; yet he frequently has good sense and judgment in his manner of telling his stories, great skill in his compositions, and is not without a considerable power of expressing the passions. The modern affectation of grace in his works, as well as in those of Bosch and Watteau, may be said to be separated by a very thin partition, from the more simple and pure grace of Correggio and Parmegiano.

Among the Dutch painters, the correct, firm, and determined pencil, which was employed by Bamboccio and Jean Miel, on vulgar and mean subjects, might, without any change, be employed on the highest; to which, indeed, it seems more properly to belong. The greatest style, if that style is confined to small figures, such as Poussin generally painted, would receive an additional grace by the elegance and precision of pencil so admirable in the works of Teniers; and though the school to which he belonged more particularly excelled in the mechanism of painting; yet it produced many, who have shown great abilities in expressing what must be ranked above mechanical excellencies. In the works of Frank Hals, the portrait-painter may observe the composition of a face, the features well put together, as the painters express it; from whence proceeds that strong-marked character of individual nature, which is so remarkable in his portraits, and is not found in an equal degree in any other painter. If he had joined to

this most difficult part of the art, a patience in finishing what he had so correctly planned, he might justly have claimed the place which Vandyke, all things considered, so justly holds as the first of portrait-painters.

Others of the same school have shown great power in expressing the character and passions of those vulgar people which were the subjects of their study and attention. Among those, Jan Steen seems to be one of the most diligent and accurate observers of what passed in those scenes which he frequented, and which were to him an academy. I can easily imagine, that if this extraordinary man had had the good fortune to have been born in Italy, instead of Holland; had he lived in Rome, instead of Leyden; and been blessed with Michael Angelo and Raffaele for his masters, instead of Brouwer and Van Goyen; the same sagacity and penetration which distinguished so accurately the different characters and expression in his vulgar figures, would, when exerted in the selection and imitation of what was great and elevated in nature, have been equally successful; and he now would have ranged with the great pillars and supporters of our Art.

Men who, although thus bound down by the almost invincible powers of early habits, have still exerted extraordinary abilities within their narrow and confined circle; and have, from the natural vigor of their mind, given a very interesting expression, and great force and energy to their works; though they can not be recommended to be exactly imitated, may yet invite an artist to endeavor to transfer, by a kind of parody, their excellencies to his own performances. Whoever has acquired the power of making this use of the Flemish, Venetian, and French schools, is a real genius, and has sources of knowledge

open to him which were wanting to the great artists who lived in the great age of painting.

To find excellencies, however dispersed, to discover beauties, however concealed by the multitude of defects with which they are surrounded, can be the work only of him, who having a mind always alive to his art, has extended his views to all ages and to all schools; and has acquired from that comprehensive mass which he has thus gathered to himself, a well-digested and perfect idea of his art, to which every thing is referred. Like a sovereign judge and arbiter of art, he is possessed of that presiding power which separates and attracts every excellence from every school; selects both from what is great, and what is little; brings home knowledge from the East and from the West; making the universe tributary towards furnishing his mind, and enriching his works with originality and variety of inventions.

Thus I have ventured to give my opinion of what appears to me the true and only method by which an artist makes himself master of his profession; which I hold ought to be one continued course of imitation, that is not to cease but with his life.

Those, who either from their own engagements and hurry of business, or from indolence, or from conceit and vanity, have neglected looking out of themselves, as far as my experience and observation reaches, have from that time, not only ceased to advance and improve in their performances, but have gone backward. They may be compared to men who have lived upon their principal till they are reduced to beggary, and left without resources.

I can recommend nothing better, therefore, than that you endeavor to infuse into your works what you learn

from the contemplation of the works of others. To recommend this, has the appearance of needless and superfluous advice; but it has fallen within my own knowledge, that artists, though they were not wanting in a sincere love for their art, though they had great pleasure in seeing good pictures, and were well skilled to distinguish what was excellent or defective in them, yet have gone on in their own manner, without any endeavor to give a little of those beauties which they admired in others, to their own works. It is difficult to conceive how the present Italian painters, who live in the midst of the treasures of art, should be contented with their own style. They proceed in their commonplace inventions, and never think it worth while to visit the works of those great artists with which they are surrounded.

I remember, several years ago, to have conversed at Rome with an artist of great fame throughout Europe; he was not without a considerable degree of abilities, but those abilities were by no means equal to his own opinion of them. From the reputation he had acquired, he too fondly concluded that he stood in the same rank when compared with his predecessors, as he held with regard to his miserable contemporary rivals. In conversation about some particulars of the works of Raffaello, he seemed to have, or to affect to have, a very obscure memory of them. He told me that he had not set his foot in the Vatican for fifteen years together; that he had been in treaty to copy a capital picture of Raffaello, but that the business had gone off: however, if the agreement had held, his copy would have greatly exceeded the original. The merit of this artist, however great we may suppose it, I am sure would have been far greater, and his presumption would

have been far less, if he had visited the Vatican, as in reason he ought to have done, at least once every month of his life.

I address myself, gentlemen, to you who have made some progress in the art, and are to be, for the future, under the guidance of your own judgment and discretion. I consider you as arrived to that period when you have a right to think for yourselves, and to presume that every man is fallible; to study the masters with a suspicion that great men are not always exempt from great faults; to criticise, compare, and rank their works in your own estimation, as they approach to, or recede from, that standard of perfection which you have formed in your own minds, but which those masters themselves, it must be remembered, have taught you to make, and which you will cease to make with correctness, when you cease to study them. It is their excellencies which have taught you their defects.

I would wish you to forget where you are, and who it is that speaks to you, I only direct you to higher models and better advisers. We can teach you here but very little; you are henceforth to be your own teachers. Do this justice, however, to the English Academy; to bear in mind, that in this place you contracted no narrow habits, no false ideas, nothing that could lead you to the imitation of any living master, who may be the fashionable darling of the day. As you have not been taught to flatter us, do not learn to flatter yourselves. We have endeavored to lead you to the admiration of nothing but what is truly admirable. If you choose inferior patterns, or if you make your own *former* works your patterns for your *latter*, it is your own fault.

The purport of this discourse, and, indeed, of most of my other discourses, is, to caution you against that false opinion, but too prevalent among artists, of the imaginary powers of native genius, and its sufficiency in great works. This opinion, according to the temper of mind it meets with, almost always produces, either a vain confidence, or a sluggish despair, both equally fatal to all proficiency.

Study, therefore, the great works of the great masters, for ever. Study, as nearly as you can, in the order, in the manner, and on the principles, on which they studied. Study nature attentively, but always with those masters in your company; consider them as models which you are to imitate, and at the same time as rivals with whom you are to contend.

DISCOURSE VII.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1776.

The reality of a standard of taste, as well as of corporal beauty.—Beside this immediate truth, there are secondary truths, which are variable; both requiring the attention of the Artist, in proportion to their stability or their influence.

GENTLEMEN,

It has been my uniform endeavor, since I first addressed you from this place, to impress you strongly with one ruling idea. I wished you to be persuaded, that success in your art depends almost entirely on your own industry; but the industry which I principally recommended, is not the industry of the *hands*, but of the *mind*.

As our art is not a divine *gift*, so neither is it a mechanical *trade*. Its foundations are laid in solid science; and practice, though essential to perfection, can never attain that to which it aims, unless it works under the direction of principle.

Some writers upon art carry this point too far, and suppose that such a body of universal and profound learning is requisite, that the very enumeration of its kinds is enough to frighten a beginner. Vitruvius, after going through the many accomplishments of nature, and the many acquirements of learning, necessary to an architect, proceeds with great gravity to assert that he ought to be well skilled in the civil law, that he may not be cheated in

the title of the ground he builds on. But without such exaggeration, we may go so far as to assert, that a painter stands in need of more knowledge than is to be picked off his pallet, or collected by looking on his model, whether it be in life or in picture. He can never be a great artist who is grossly illiterate.

Every man whose business is description, ought to be tolerably conversant with the poets, in some language or other; that he may imbibe a poetical spirit, and enlarge his stock of ideas. He ought to acquire an habit of comparing and digesting his notions. He ought not to be wholly unacquainted with that part of philosophy which gives an insight into human nature, and relates to the manners, characters, passions, and affections. He ought to know *something* concerning the mind, as well as a *great deal* concerning the body of man. For this purpose, it is not necessary that he should go into such a compass of reading, as must, by distracting his attention, disqualify him for the practical part of his profession, and make him sink the performer in the critic. Reading, if it can be made the favorite recreation of his leisure hours, will improve and enlarge his mind, without retarding his actual industry. What such partial and desultory reading can not afford, may be supplied by the conversation of learned and ingenious men, which is the best of all substitutes for those who have not the means or opportunities of deep study. There are many such men in this age; and they will be pleased with communicating their ideas to artists when they see them curious and docile, if they are treated with that respect and deference which is so justly their due. Into such society, young artists, if they make it the point of their ambition, will, by degrees, be admitted.

There, without formal teaching, they will insensibly come to feel and reason like those they live with, and find a rational and systematic taste imperceptibly formed in their minds, which they will know how to reduce to a standard, by applying general truth to their own purposes, better, perhaps, than those to whom they owed the original sentiment.

Of these studies, and this conversation, the desire and legitimate offspring, is a power of distinguishing right from wrong; which power applied to works of art, is denominated **TASTE**. Let me, then, without further introduction, enter upon an examination, whether taste be so far beyond our reach, as to be unattainable by care; or be so very vague and capricious, that no care ought to be employed about it.

It has been the fate of arts to be enveloped in mysterious and incomprehensible language, as if it was thought necessary that even the terms should correspond to the idea entertained of the instability and uncertainty of the rules which they expressed.

To speak of genius and taste, as in any way connected with reason or common sense, would be, in the opinion of some towering talkers, to speak like a man who possessed neither; who had never felt that enthusiasm, or, to use their own inflated language, was never warmed by that Promethean fire, which animates the canvass and vivifies the marble.

If, in order to be intelligible, I appear to degrade art by bringing her down from the visionary situation in the clouds, it is only to give her a more solid mansion upon the earth. It is necessary that at some time or other we should see things as they really are, and not impose on

ourselves by that false magnitude with which objects appear when viewed indistinctly as through a mist.

We will allow a poet to express his meaning, when his meaning is not well known to himself, with a certain degree of obscurity, as it is one sort of the sublime. But when, in plain prose, we gravely talk of courting the Muse in shady bowers; waiting the call and inspiration of Genius, finding out where he inhabits, and where he is to be invoked with the greatest success; of attending to times and seasons when the imagination shoots with the greatest vigor, whether at the summer solstice or the vernal equinox; sagaciously observing how much the wild freedom and liberty of imagination is cramped by attention to established rules; and how this same imagination begins to grow dim in advanced age, smothered and deadened by too much judgment; when we talk such language, or entertain such sentiments as these, we generally rest contented with mere words, or at best entertain notions not only groundless but pernicious.

If all this means, what it is very possible was originally intended only to be meant, that in order to cultivate an art a man secludes himself from the commerce of the world, and retires into the country at particular seasons: or that at one time of the year his body is in better health, and consequently his mind fitter for the business of hard thinking than at another time; or that the mind may be fatigued and grow confused by long and unremitted application; this I can understand. I can likewise believe, that a man eminent when young for possessing poetical imagination, may, from having taken another road, so neglect its cultivation, as to show less of its powers in his latter life. But I am persuaded, that scarce a poet is to be found, from Homer

down to Dryden, who preserved a sound mind in a sound body, and continued practising his profession to the very last, whose latter works are not as replete with the fire of imagination, as those which were produced in his more youthful days.

To understand literally these metaphors, or ideas expressed in poetical language, seems to be equally absurd as to conclude, that because painters sometimes represent poets writing from the dictates of a little winged boy or genius, that this same genius did really inform him in a whisper what he was to write; and that he is himself but a mere machine, unconscious of the operations of his own mind.

Opinions generally received and floating in the world, whether true or false, we naturally adopt and make our own: they may be considered as a kind of inheritance to which we succeed and are tenants for life, and which we leave to our posterity very nearly in the condition in which we received it; it not being much in any one man's power either to impair or improve it. The greatest part of these opinions, like current coin in its circulation, we are used to take without weighing or examining; but by this inevitable inattention many adulterated pieces are received, which, when we seriously estimate our wealth, we must throw away. So the collector of popular opinions, when he embodies his knowledge, and forms a system, must separate those which are true from those which are only plausible. But it becomes more peculiarly a duty to the professors of art not to let any opinions relating to *that* art pass unexamined. The caution and circumspection required in such examination we shall presently have an opportunity of explaining.

Genius and taste, in their common acceptation, appear

to be very nearly related ; the difference lies only in this, that genius has superadded to it a habit or power of execution ; or we may say, that taste, when this power is added, changes its name, and is called genius. They both, in the popular opinion, pretend to an entire exemption from the restraint of rules. It is supposed that their powers are intuitive ; that under the name of genius great works are produced, and under the name of taste an exact judgment is given, without our knowing why, and without our being under the least obligation to reason, precept, or experience.

One can scarce state these opinions without exposing their absurdity ; yet they are constantly in the mouths of men, and particularly of artists. They who have thought seriously on this subject, do not carry the point so far ; yet I am persuaded, that even among those few who may be called thinkers, the prevalent opinion allows less than it ought to the powers of reason ; and considers the principles of taste, which give all their authority to the rules of art, as more fluctuating, and as having less solid foundations, than we shall find, upon examination, they really have.

The common saying, that *tastes are not to be disputed*, owes its influence, and its general reception, to the same error which leads us to imagine this faculty of too high an original to submit to the authority of an earthly tribunal. It likewise corresponds with the notions of those who consider it as a mere phantom of the imagination, so devoid of substance as to elude all criticism.

We often appear to differ in sentiments from each other, merely from the inaccuracy of terms, as we are not obliged to speak always with critical exactness. Something of this too may arise from want of words in the lan-

guage in which we speak, to express the more nice discrimination which a deep investigation discovers. A great deal, however, of this difference vanishes, when each opinion is tolerably explained and understood by constancy and precision in the use of terms.

We apply the term TASTE to that act of the mind by which we like or dislike, whatever be the subject. Our judgment upon an airy nothing, a fancy which has no foundation, is called by the same name which we give to our determination concerning those truths which refer to the most general and most unalterable principles of human nature; to the works which are only to be produced by the greatest efforts of the human understanding. However inconvenient this may be, we are obliged to take words as we find them; all we can do is to distinguish the *Things* to which they are applied.

We may let pass those things which are at once subjects of taste and sense, and which having as much certainty as the senses themselves, give no occasion to inquiry or dispute. The natural appetite or taste of the human mind is for *Truth*; whether that truth results from the real agreement or equality of original ideas among themselves; from the agreement of the representation of any object with the thing represented; or from the correspondence of the several parts of any arrangement with each other. It is the very same taste which relishes a demonstration in geometry, that is pleased with the resemblance of a picture to an original and touched with the harmony of music.

All these have unalterable and fixed foundations in nature, and are therefore equally investigated by reason, and known by study; some with more, some with less

clearness, but all exactly in the same way. A picture that is unlike, is false. Disproportionate ordonnance of parts is not right; because it can not be true, until it ceases to be a contradiction to assert that the parts have no relation to the wole. Coloring is true, when it is naturally adapted to the eye, from brightness, from softness, from harmony, from resemblance; because these agree with their object, NATURE, and therefore are true; as true as mathematical demonstration; but known to be true only to those who study these things.

But besides real, there is also apparent truth, or opinion, or prejudice. With regard to real truth, when it is known, the taste which conforms to it is, and must be, uniform. With regard to the second sort of truth, which may be called truth upon sufferance, or truth by courtesy, it is not fixed, but variable. However, whilst these opinions and prejudices on which it is founded, continue, they operate as truth; and the art, whose office it is to please the mind, as well as instruct it, must direct itself according to opinion, or it will not attain its end.

In proportion as these prejudices are known to be generally diffused, or long received, the taste which conforms to them approaches nearer to certainty, and to a sort of resemblance to real science, even where opinions are found to be no better than prejudices. And since they deserve, on account of their duration and extent, to be considered as really true, they become capable of no small degree of stability and determination, by their permanent and uniform nature.

As these prejudices become more narrow, more local, more transitory, this secondary taste becomes more and more fantastical; recedes from real science; is less to be

approved by reason, and less followed by practice : though in no case perhaps to be wholly neglected, where it does not stand, as it sometimes does, in direct defiance of the most respectable opinions received amongst mankind.

Having laid down these positions, I shall proceed with less method, because less will serve to explain and apply them.

We will take it for granted, that reason is something invariable, and fixed in the nature of things ; and without endeavoring to go back to an account of first principles, which for ever will elude our search, we will conclude, that whatever goes under the name of taste, which we can fairly bring under the dominion of reason, must be considered as equally exempt from change. If, therefore, in the course of this inquiry, we can show that there are rules for the conduct of the artist which are fixed and invariable, it follows, of course, that the art of the connoisseur, or, in other words, taste, has likewise invariable principles.

Of the judgment which we make on the works of art, and the preference that we give to one class of art over another, if a reason be demanded, the question is perhaps evaded by answering, I judge from my taste ; but it does not follow that a better answer can not be given, though, for common gazers, this may be sufficient. Every man is not obliged to investigate the cause of his approbation or dislike.

The arts would lie open for ever to caprice and casualty, if those who are to judge of their excellencies had no settled principles by which they are to regulate their decisions, and the merit or defect of performances were to be determined by unguided fancy. And indeed we may venture to assert, that whatever speculative knowledge is necessary to

the artist, is equally and indispensably necessary to the connoisseur.

The first idea that occurs in the consideration of what is fixed in art, or in taste, is that presiding principle of which I have so frequently spoken in former discourses—the general idea of nature. The beginning, the middle, and the end of every thing that is valuable in taste, is comprised in the knowledge of what is truly nature; for whatever notions are not conformable to those of nature, or universal opinion, must be considered as more or less capricious.

My notion of nature comprehends not only the forms which nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric and organization, as I may call it, of the human mind and imagination. The terms beauty, or nature, which are general ideas, are but different modes of expressing the same thing, whether we apply these terms to statues, poetry, or pictures. Deformity is not nature, but an accidental deviation from her accustomed practice. This general idea therefore ought to be called Nature; and nothing else, correctly speaking, has a right to that name. But we are sure so far from speaking, in common conversation, with any such accuracy, that, on the contrary, when we criticise Rembrandt and other Dutch painters, who introduced into their historical pictures exact representations of individual objects with all their imperfections, we say—though it is not in a good taste, yet it is nature.

This misapplication of terms must be very often perplexing to the young Student. Is not art, he may say, an imitation of nature? Must not he, therefore, who imitates her with the greatest fidelity, be the best artist? By this mode of reasoning Rembrandt has a higher place than

Raffaello. But a very little reflection will serve to show us that these particularities can not be nature; for how can that be the nature of man in which no two individuals are the same?

It plainly appears, that as a work is conducted under the influence of general ideas, or partial, it is principally to be considered as the effect of a good or a bad taste.

As beauty, therefore, does not consist in taking what lies immediately before you, so neither, in our pursuit of taste, are those opinions which we first received and adopted, the best choice, or the most natural to the mind and imagination. In the infancy of our knowledge we seize with greediness the good that is within our reach; it is by after-consideration, and in consequence of discipline, that we refuse the present for a greater good at a distance. The nobility or elevation of all arts, like the excellency of virtue itself, consists in adopting this enlarged and comprehensive idea; and all criticism built upon the more confined view of what is natural, may properly be called *shallow* criticism, rather than false: its defect is, that the truth is not sufficiently extensive.

It has sometimes happened, that some of the greatest men in our art have been betrayed into errors by this confined mode of reasoning. Poussin, who upon the whole, may be produced as an artist strictly attentive to the most enlarged and extensive ideas of nature, from not having settled principles on this point, has, in one instance at least, I think, deserted truth for prejudice. He is said to have vindicated the conduct of Julio Romano for his inattention to the masses of light and shade, or grouping the figures in THE BATTLE OF CONSTANTINE, as if designedly neglected, the better to correspond with the hurry and confusion

of a battle. Poussin's own conduct in many of his pictures, makes us more easily give credit to this report. That it was too much his own practice, *THE SACRIFICE TO SILENUS*, and *THE TRIUMPH OF BACCHUS AND ARIADNE*,* may be produced as instances; but this principle is still more apparent, and may be said to be even more ostentatiously displayed in his *PERSEUS* and *MEDUSA'S HEAD*.†

This is undoubtedly a subject of great bustle and tumult, and that the first effect of the picture may correspond to the subject, every principle of composition is violated; there is no principal figure, no principal light, no groups; every thing is dispersed, and in such a state of confusion, that the eye finds no repose any where. In consequence of the forbidding appearance, I remember turning from it with disgust, and should not have looked a second time, if I had not been called back to a closer inspection. I then indeed found, what we may expect always to find in the works of Poussin, correct drawing, forcible expression, and just character; in short, all the excellencies which so much distinguish the works of this learned painter.

This conduct of Poussin I hold to be entirely improper to imitate. A picture should please at first sight, and appear to invite the spectator's attention: if, on the contrary, the general effect offends the eye, a second view is not always sought, whatever more substantial and intrinsic merit it may possess.

Perhaps no apology ought to be received for offenses committed against the vehicle (whether it be the organ of

* In the Cabinet of the Earl of Ashburnham.

† In the Cabinet of Sir Peter Burrell.

seeing or of hearing) by which our pleasures are conveyed to the mind. We must take care that the eye be not perplexed and distracted by a confusion of equal parts, or equal lights, or offended by an unharmonious mixture of colors, as we should guard against offending the ear by unharmonious sounds. We may venture to be more confident of the truth of this observation, since we find that Shakspeare, on a parallel occasion, has made Hamlet recommend to the players a precept of the same kind—never to offend the ear by harsh sounds: *In the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of your passions, says he, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.* And yet, at the same time, he very justly observes, *The end of playing, both at the first, and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature.* No one can deny, that violent passions will naturally emit harsh and disagreeable tones: yet this great poet and critic thought that this imitation of nature would cost too much, if purchased at the expense of disagreeable sensations, or, as he expresses it, of *splitting the ear*. The poet and actor, as well as the painter of genius, who is well acquainted with all the variety and sources of pleasure in the mind and imagination, has little regard or attention to common nature, or creeping after common sense. By overleaping those narrow bounds, he more effectually seizes the whole mind, and more powerfully accomplishes his purpose. This success is ignorantly imagined to proceed from inattention to all rules, and a defiance of reason and judgment; whereas it is in truth acting according to the best rules and the justest reason.

He who thinks nature, in the narrow sense of the word, is alone to be followed, will produce but a scanty enter-

tainment for the imagination ; every thing is to be done with which it is natural for the mind to be pleased, whether it proceeds from simplicity or variety, uniformity or irregularity; whether the scenes are familiar or exotic; rude and wild, or enriched and cultivated; for it is natural for the mind to be pleased with all these in their turn. In short whatever pleases has in it what is analogous to the mind, and is, therefore, in the highest and best sense of the word, natural.

It is the sense of nature or truth, which ought more particularly to be cultivated by the professors of art; and it may be observed, that many wise and learned men, who have accustomed their minds to admit nothing for truth but what can be proved by mathematical demonstration, have seldom any relish for those arts which address themselves to the fancy, the rectitude and truth of which is known by another kind of proof; and we may add, that the acquisition of this knowledge requires as much circumspection and sagacity as is necessary to attain those truths which are more capable of demonstration. Reason must ultimately determine our choice on every occasion; but this reason may still be exerted ineffectually by applying to taste principles which, though right as far as they go, yet do not reach the object. No man, for instance, can deny, that it seems at first view very reasonable, that a statue which is to carry down to posterity the resemblance of an individual, should be dressed in the fashion of the times, in the dress which he himself wore; this would certainly be true, if the dress were part of the man; but after a time, the dress is only an amusement for an antiquarian; and if it obstructs the general design of the piece, it is to be disregarded by the artist. Common sense must

here give way to a higher sense. In the naked form, and in the disposition of the drapery, the difference between one artist and another is principally seen. But if he is compelled to exhibit the modern dress, the naked form is entirely hid, and the drapery is already disposed by the skill of the tailor. Were a Phidias to obey such absurd commands, he would please no more than an ordinary sculptor; in the inferior parts of every art, the learned and the ignorant are nearly upon a level.

These were probably among the reasons that induced the sculptor of that wonderful figure of Laocoon, to exhibit him naked, notwithstanding he was surprised in the act of sacrificing to Apollo, and consequently ought to have been shown in his sacerdotal habits, if those greater reasons had not preponderated. Art is not yet in so high estimation with us, as to obtain so great a sacrifice as the ancients made, especially the Grecians, who suffered themselves to be represented naked, whether they were generals, law-givers or kings.

Under this head of balancing and choosing the greater reason, or of two evils taking the least, we may consider the conduct of Rubens in the Luxembourg gallery, where he has mixed allegorical figures with the representations of real personages, which must be acknowledged to be a fault; yet, if the artist considered himself as engaged to furnish this gallery with a rich, various, and splendid ornament, this could not be done, at least in an equal degree, without peopling the air and water with these allegorical figures; he therefore accomplished all that he purposed. In this case all lesser considerations, which tend to obstruct the great end of the work, must yield and give way.

The variety which portraits and modern dresses, mixed

with allegorical figures, produce, is not to be slightly given up upon a punctilio of reason, when that reason deprives the art in a manner of its very existence. It must always be remembered that the business of a great painter is to produce a great picture; he must therefore take especial care not to be cajoled by specious arguments out of his materials.

What has been so often said to the disadvantage of allegorical poetry—that it is tedious and uninteresting—can not with the same propriety be applied to painting, where the interest is of a different kind. If allegorical painting produces a greater variety of ideal beauty, a richer, a more various and delightful composition, and gives to the artist a greater opportunity of exhibiting his skill, all the interest he wishes for is accomplished; such a picture not only attracts, but fixes the attention.

If it be objected that Rubens judged ill at first in thinking it necessary to make his work so very ornamental, this puts the question upon new ground. It was his peculiar style; he could paint in no other; and he was selected for that work probably because it was his style. Nobody will dispute but some of the best of the Roman or Bolognian schools would have produced a more learned and more noble work.

This leads us to another important province of taste, that of weighing the value of the different classes of the art, and of estimating them accordingly.

All arts have means within them of applying themselves with success both to the intellectual and sensitive part of our natures. It can not be disputed, supposing both these means put in practice with equal abilities, to which we ought to give the preference; to him who repre-

sents the heroic arts and more dignified passions of man, or to him who, by the help of meretricious ornaments, however elegant and graceful, captivates the sensuality, as it may be called, of our taste. Thus the Roman and Bolognian schools are reasonably preferred to the Venetian, Flemish, or Dutch schools, as they address themselves to our best and noblest faculties.

Well turned periods in eloquence, or harmony of numbers in poetry, which are in those arts what coloring is in painting however highly we may esteem them, can never be considered as of equal importance with the art of unfolding truths that are useful to mankind, and which make us better or wiser. Nor can those works which remind us of the poverty and meanness of our nature, be considered as of equal rank with what excites ideas of grandeur, or raises and dignifies humanity; or, in the words of a late poet, which makes the beholder *learn to venerate himself as man*.*

It is reason and good sense, therefore, which ranks and estimates every art, and every part of that art, according to its importance, from the painter of animated, down to inanimated nature. We will not allow a man, who shall prefer the inferior style, to say it is his taste; taste here has nothing, or at least ought to have nothing, to do with the question. He wants not taste, but sense and soundness of judgment.

Indeed perfection in an inferior style may be reasonably preferred to mediocrity in the highest walks of art. A landscape of Claude Lorraine may be preferred to a history by Luca Giordano; but hence appears the necessity of the connoisseur's knowing in what consists the excellency of

* Dr. Goldsmith.

each class, in order to judge how near it approaches to perfection.

Even in works of the same kind, as in history-painting, which is composed of various parts, excellence of an inferior species, carried to a very high degree, will make a work very valuable, and in some measure compensate for the absence of the higher kinds of merit. It is the duty of the connoisseur to know and esteem, as much as it may deserve, every part of painting: he will not then think even Bassano unworthy of his notice; who, though totally devoid of expression, sense, grace, or elegance, may be esteemed on account of his admirable taste of colors, which, in his best works, are little inferior to those of Titian.

Since I have mentioned Bassano, we must do him likewise the justice to acknowledge, that though he did not aspire to the dignity of expressing the characters and passions of men, yet with respect to facility and truth in his manner of touching animals of all kinds, and giving them what painters call *their character*, few have excelled him.

To Bassano we may add Paul Veronese and Tintoret for their entire inattention to what is justly thought the most essential part of our art, the expression of the passions. Notwithstanding these glaring deficiencies, we justly esteem their works; but it must be remembered, that they do not please from those defects, but from their great excellencies of another kind, and in spite of such transgressions. These excellencies, too, as far as they go, are founded in the truth of *general nature*: they tell the *truth*, though not the *whole truth*.

By these considerations, which can never be too frequently impressed, may be obviated two errors, which I observed to have been, formerly at least, the most preva-

lent, and to be most injurious to artists; that of thinking taste and genius to have nothing to do with reason, and that of taking particular living objects for nature.

I shall now say something on that part of *taste*, which as I have hinted to you before, does not belong so much to the external form of things, but is addressed to the mind, and depends on its original frame, or, to use the expression, the organisation of the soul; I mean the imagination and the passions. The principles of these are as invariable as the former, and are to be known and reasoned upon in the same manner, by an appeal to common sense deciding upon the common feelings of mankind. This sense, and these feelings appear to me of equal authority, and equally conclusive. Now this appeal implies a general uniformity and agreement in the minds of men. It would be else an idle and vain endeavor to establish rules of art; it would be pursuing a phantom, to attempt to move affections with which we were entirely unacquainted. We have no reason to suspect there is a greater difference between our minds than between our forms; of which, though there are no two alike, yet there is a general similitude that goes through the whole race of mankind; and those who have cultivated their taste, can distinguish what is beautiful or deformed, or, in other words, what agrees with or deviates from the general idea of nature, in one case, as well as in the other.

The internal fabric of our minds, as well as the external form of our bodies, being nearly uniform; it seems then to follow of course, that as the imagination is incapable of producing any thing originally of itself, and can only vary and combine those ideas with which it is furnished by means of the senses, there will be necessarily an agreement in the imaginations, as in the senses of men.

There being this agreement, it follows, that in all cases, in our lightest amusements, as well as in our most serious actions and engagements of life, we must regulate our affections of every kind by that of others. The well disciplined mind acknowledges this authority, and submits its own opinion to the public voice. It is from knowing what are the general feelings and passions of mankind, that we acquire a true idea of what imagination is; though it appears as if we had nothing to do but to consult our own particular sensations, and these were sufficient to ensure us from all error and mistake.

A knowledge of the disposition and character of the human mind can be acquired only by experience; a great deal will be learned, I admit, by a habit of examining what passes in our bosoms, what are our own motives of action, and of what kind of sentiments we are conscious on any occasion. We may suppose an uniformity, and conclude that the same effect will be produced by the same cause in the mind of others. This examination will contribute to suggest to us matters of inquiry; but we can never be sure that our own sentiments are true and right, till they are confirmed by more extensive observation. One man opposing another determines nothing; but a general union of minds, like a general combination of the forces of all mankind, makes a strength that is irresistible. In fact, as he who does not know himself, does not know others, so it may be said with equal truth, that he who does not know others, knows himself but very imperfectly.

A man who thinks he is guarding himself against prejudices by resisting the authority of others, leaves open every avenue to singularity, vanity, self-conceit, obstinacy, and many other vices, all tending to warp the judgment,

and prevent the natural operation of his faculties. This submission to others is a deference which we owe, and indeed are forced involuntarily to pay. In fact, we never are satisfied with our opinions, whatever we may pretend, till they are ratified and confirmed by the suffrages of the rest of mankind. We dispute and wrangle for ever; we endeavor to get men to come to us, when we do not go to them.

He therefore who is acquainted with the works which have pleased different ages and different countries, and has formed his opinion on them, has more materials and more means of knowing what is analogous to the mind of man, than he who is conversant only with the works of his own age or country. What has pleased, and continues to please, is likely to please again: hence are derived the rules of art, and on this immoveable foundation they must ever stand.

This search and study of the history of the mind ought not to be confined to one art only. It is by the analogy that one art bears to another, that many things are ascertained, which either were but faintly seen, or, perhaps, would not have been discovered at all, if the inventor had not received the first hints from the practices of a sister art on a similar occasion.* The frequent allusions which every man who treats of any art is obliged to make to others, in order to illustrate and confirm his principles, sufficiently show their near connection and inseparable relation.

All arts having the same general end, which is to please; and addressing themselves to the same faculties

* *Nulla ars, non alterius artis, aut mater, aut popinqua est.*—TERTULL. as cited by JUNIUS.

through the medium of the senses; it follows that their rules and principles must have as great affinity as the different materials and the different organs or vehicles by which they pass to the mind, will permit them to retain.*

We may therefore conclude, that the real substance, as it may be called, of what goes under the name of taste, is fixed and established in the nature of things; that there are certain and regular causes by which the imagination and passions of men are affected; and that the knowledge of these causes is acquired by a laborious and diligent investigation of nature, and by the same slow progress as wisdom or knowledge of every kind, however instantaneous its operations may appear when thus acquired.

It has been often observed, that the good and virtuous man alone can acquire this true or just relish even of works of art. This opinion will not appear entirely without foundation, when we consider that the same habit of mind, which is acquired by our search after truth, in the more serious duties of life, is only transferred to the pursuit of lighter amusements. The same disposition, the same desire to find something steady, substantial, and durable, on which the mind can lean, as it were, and rest with safety, actuates us in both cases. The subject only is changed. We pursue the same method in our search after the idea of beauty and perfection in each; of virtue, by looking forwards beyond ourselves to society, and to the whole; of arts, by extending our views in the same manner, to all ages and all times.

Every art, like our own, has in its composition, fluc-

* Omnes artes quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognatione inter se continentur.
—CICERO.

tuating as well as fixed principles. It is an attentive inquiry into their difference, that will enable us to determine how far we are influenced by custom and habit, and what is fixed in the nature of things.

To distinguish how much has solid foundation, we may have recourse to the same proof by which some hold that wit ought to be tried; whether it preserves itself when translated. That wit is false, which can subsist only in one language; and that picture which pleases only one age or one nation, owes its reception to some local or accidental association of ideas.

We may apply this to every custom and habit of life. Thus, the general principles of urbanity, politeness, or civility, have been the same in all nations; but the mode in which they are dressed is continually varying. The general idea of showing respect, is by making yourself less; but the manner, whether by bowing the body, kneeling, prostration, pulling off the upper part of our dress, or taking away the lower,* is a matter of custom.

Thus, in regard to ornaments,—it would be unjust to conclude, that, because they were at first arbitrarily contrived, they are therefore undeserving of our attention; on the contrary, he who neglects the cultivation of those ornaments, acts contrary to nature and reason. As life would be imperfect without its highest ornaments, the Arts, so these arts themselves would be imperfect without *their* ornaments. Though we, by no means, ought to rank with these positive and substantial beauties, yet it must be allowed that a knowledge of both is essentially requisite towards forming a complete, whole, and perfect taste. It

* Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.—Exodus, iii. 5.

is in reality from their ornaments, that arts receive their peculiar character and complexion; we may add, that in them we find the characteristical mark of a national taste; as, by throwing up a feather in the air, we know which way the wind blows, better than by a more heavy matter.

The striking distinction between the works of the Roman, Bolognian, and Venetian schools, consists more in that general effect which is produced by colors, than in the more profound excellencies of the art; at least it is from thence that each is distinguished and known at first sight. Thus it is the ornaments, rather than the proportions of architecture, which at the first glance distinguish the different orders from each other; the Doric is known by its triglyphs, the Ionic by its volutes, and the Corinthian by its acanthus.

What distinguishes oratory from a cold narration is a more liberal, though chaste, use of those ornaments which go under the name of figurative and metaphorical expressions; and poetry distinguishes itself from oratory, by words and expressions still more ardent and glowing. What separates and distinguishes poetry, is more particularly the ornament of *verse*; it is this which gives it its character, and is an essential without which it cannot exist. Custom has appropriated different metre to different kinds of composition, in which the world is not perfectly agreed. In England the dispute is not yet settled, which is to be preferred, rhyme or blank verse. But however we disagree about what these metrical ornaments shall be, that some metre is essentially necessary, is universally acknowledged.

In poetry or eloquence, to determine how far figurative or metaphorical language may proceed, and when it begins to be affectation or beside the truth, must be determined

by taste; though this taste, we must never forget, is regulated and formed by the presiding feelings of mankind,—by those works which have approved themselves to all times and all persons. Thus, though eloquence has undoubtedly an essential and intrinsic excellence, and immoveable principles common to all languages, founded in the nature of our passions and affections; yet it has its ornaments and modes of address, which are merely arbitrary. What is approved in the eastern nations as grand and majestic, would be considered by the Greeks and Romans as turgid and inflated; and they, in return, would be thought by the Orientals to express themselves in a cold and insipid manner.

We may add, likewise, to the credit of ornaments, that it is by their means that Art itself accomplishes its purpose. Fresnoy calls coloring, which is one of the chief ornaments of painting, *lena sororis*, that which procures lovers and admirers to the more valuable excellencies of the art.

It appears to be the same right turn of mind which enables a man to acquire the *truth*, or the just idea of what is right, in the ornaments, as in the more stable principles of art. It has still the same centre of perfection, though it is the centre of a smaller circle.

To illustrate this by the fashion of dress, in which there is allowed to be a good or bad taste. The component parts of dress are continually changing from great to little, from short to long; but the general form still remains; it is still the same general dress, which is comparatively fixed, though on a very slender foundation; but it is on this which fashion must rest. He who invents with the most success, or dresses in the best taste, would probably, from the same

sagacity employed to greater purposes, have discovered equal skill, or have formed the same correct taste, in the highest labors of art.

I have mentioned taste in dress, which is certainly one of the lowest subjects to which this word is applied; yet, as I have before observed, there is a right even here, however narrow its foundation, respecting the fashion of any particular nation. But we have still more slender means of determining, to which of the different customs of different ages or countries we ought to give the preference, since they seem to be all equally removed from nature. If an European, when he has cut off his beard, and put false hair on his head, or bound up his own natural hair in regular hard knots, as unlike nature as he can possibly make it; and after having rendered them immoveable by the help of the fat of hogs, has covered the whole with flour, laid on by a machine with the utmost regularity; if, when thus attired, he issues forth, and meets a Cherokee Indian, who has bestowed as much time at his toilet, and laid on with equal care and attention his yellow and red ochre on parts of his forehead or cheeks, as he judges most becoming; whoever of these two despises the other for this attention to the fashion of his country, which ever first feels himself provoked to laugh, is the barbarian.

All these fashions are very innocent; neither worth disquisition, nor any endeavor to alter them; as the change would, in all probability, be equally distant from nature. The only circumstance against which indignation may reasonably be moved, is, where the operation is painful or destructive of health; such as some of the practices at Otaheite, and the straight lacing of the English ladies; of the last of which practices, how destructive it must be to

health and long life, the professor of anatomy took an opportunity of proving a few days since in this Academy.

It is in dress as in things of greater consequence. Fashions originate from those only who have the high and powerful advantages of rank, birth, and fortune. Many of the ornaments of art, those at least for which no reason can be given, are transmitted to us, are adopted, and acquire their consequence from the company in which we have been used to see them. As Greece and Rome are the fountains from whence have flowed all kinds of excellence, to that veneration which they have a right to claim for the pleasure and knowledge which they have afforded us, we voluntarily add our approbation of every ornament and every custom that belonged to them, even to the fashion of their dress. For it may be observed that, not satisfied with them in their own place, we make no difficulty of dressing statues of modern heroes or senators in the fashion of the Roman armor or peaceful robe; we go so far as hardly to bear a statue in any other drapery.

The figures of the great men of those nations have come down to us in sculpture. In sculpture remain almost all the excellent specimens of ancient art. We have so far associated personal dignity to the persons thus represented, and the truth of art to their manner of representation, that it is not in our power any longer to separate them. This is not so in painting; because having no excellent ancient portraits, that connection was never formed. Indeed we could no more venture to paint a general officer in a Roman military habit, than we could make a statue in the present uniform. But since we have no ancient portraits, to show how ready we are to adopt those kind of prejudices, we make the best authority among the moderns

serve the same purpose. The great variety of excellent portraits with which Vandyke has enriched this nation, we are not content to admire for their real excellence, but extend our approbation even to the dress which happened to be the fashion of that age. We all very well remember how common it was a few years ago for portraits to be drawn in this fantastic dress; and this custom is not yet entirely laid aside. By this means it must be acknowledged very ordinary pictures acquired something of the air and effect of the works of Vandyke, and appeared therefore at first sight to be better pictures than they really were; they appeared so, however, to those only who had the means of making this association; and when made, it was irresistible. But this association is nature, and refers to that secondary truth that comes from conformity to general prejudice and opinion; it is therefore not merely fantastical. Besides the prejudice which we have in favor of ancient dresses, there may be likewise other reasons for the effect which they produce; among which we may justly rank the simplicity of them, consisting of little more than one single piece of drapery, without those whimsical capricious forms by which all other dresses are embarrassed.

Thus, though it is from the prejudice we have in favor of the ancients, who have taught us architecture, that we have adopted likewise their ornaments; and though we are satisfied that neither nature nor reason are the foundation of those beauties which we imagine we see in that art, yet if any one, persuaded of this truth, should therefore invent new orders of equal beauty, which we will suppose to be possible, they would not please; nor ought he to complain, since the old has that great advantage of having custom and prejudice on its side. In this case we leave what has

every prejudice in its favor, to take that which will have no advantage over what we have left, but novelty; which soon destroys itself, and at any rate is but a weak antagonist against custom.

Ancient ornaments, having the right of possession, ought not to be removed, unless to make room for that which not only has higher pretensions, but such pretensions as will balance the evil and confusion which innovation always brings with it.

To this we may add, that even the durability of the materials will often contribute to give a superiority to one object over another. Ornaments in buildings, with which taste is principally concerned, are composed of materials which last longer than those of which dress is composed; the former, therefore, make higher pretensions to our favor and prejudice.

Some attention is surely due to what we can no more get rid of, than we can go out of ourselves. We are creatures of prejudice; we neither can nor ought to eradicate it; we must only regulate it by reason; which kind of regulation is indeed little more than obliging the lesser, the local and temporary prejudices, to give way to those which are more durable and lasting.

He, therefore, who in his practice of portrait-painting, wishes to dignify his subject, which we will suppose to be a lady, will not paint her in the modern dress, the familiarity of which alone is sufficient to destroy all dignity. He takes care that his work shall correspond to those ideas and that imagination which he knows will regulate the judgment of others; and, therefore, dresses his figure something with the general air of the antique for the sake of dignity, and preserves something of the modern for the

sake of likeness. By this conduct his works correspond with those prejudices which we have in favor of what we continually see ; and the relish of the antique simplicity corresponds with what we may call the more learned and scientific prejudice.

There was a statue made not long since of Voltaire, which the sculptor, not having that respect for the prejudices of mankind which he ought to have had, made entirely naked, and as meagre and emaciated as the original is said to be. The consequence was what might have been expected : it remained in the sculptor's shop, though it was intended as a public ornament and a public honor to Voltaire, for it was procured at the expense of his contemporary wits and admirers.

Whoever would reform a nation, supposing a bad taste to prevail in it, will not accomplish his purpose by going directly against the stream of their prejudices. Men's minds must be prepared to receive what is new to them. Reformation is a work of time. A national taste, however wrong it may be, can not be totally changed at once ; we must yield a little to the prepossession which has taken hold on the mind, and we may then bring people to adopt what would offend them, if endeavored to be introduced by violence. When Baptista Franco was employed, in conjunction with Titian, Paul Veronese and Tintoret, to adorn the library of St. Mark, his work, Vasari says, gave less satisfaction than any of the others : the dry manner of the Roman school was very ill calculated to please eyes that had been accustomed to the luxuriance, splendor, and richness of Venetian coloring. Had the Romans been the judges of this work, probably the determination would have been just contrary ; for in the more noble parts of the

art Battista Franco was perhaps not inferior to any of his rivals.

GENTLEMEN,

It has been the main scope and principal end of this discourse to demonstrate the reality of a standard in taste, as well as in corporeal beauty; that a false or depraved taste, is a thing as well known, as easily discovered, as anything that is deformed, mis-shapen, or wrong, in our form or outward make; and that this knowledge is derived from the uniformity of sentiments among mankind, from whence proceeds the knowledge of what are the general habits of nature; the result of which is an idea of perfect beauty.

If what has been advanced be true,—that beside this beauty or truth, which is formed on the uniform, eternal, and immutable laws of nature, and which of necessity can be but *one*; that beside this one immutable verity there are likewise what we have called apparent or secondary truths, proceeding from local and temporary prejudices, fancies, fashions or accidental connection of ideas; if it appears that these last have still their foundation, however slender, in the original fabric of our minds; it follows that all these truths or beauties deserve and require the attention of the artist, in proportion to their stability or duration, or as their influence is more or less extensive. And let me add, that as they ought not to pass their just bounds, so neither do they, in a well-regulated taste, at all prevent or weaken the influence of those general principles, which alone can give to art its true and permanent dignity.

To form this just taste is undoubtedly in your own power, but it is to reason and philosophy that you must have

course; from them you must borrow the balance, by which is to be weighed and estimated the value of every pretension that intrudes itself on your notice.

The general objection which is made to the introduction of Philosophy into the regions of taste, is, that it checks and restrains the flights of the imagination, and gives that timidity, which an over-carefulness not to err or act contrary to reason is likely to produce. It is not so. Fear is neither reason nor philosophy. The true spirit of philosophy, by giving knowledge, gives a manly confidence, and substitutes rational firmness in the place of vain presumption. A man of real taste is always a man of judgment in other respects; and those inventions which either disdain or shrink from reason, are generally, I fear, more like the dreams of a distempered brain, than the exalted enthusiasm of a sound and true genius. In the midst of the highest flights of fancy or imagination, reason ought to preside from first to last, though I admit her more powerful operation is upon reflection.

Let me add, that some of the greatest names of antiquity, and those who have most distinguished themselves in works of genius and imagination, were equally eminent for their critical skill. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Horace; and among the moderns, Boileau, Corneille, Pope, and Dryden, are at least instances of genius not being destroyed by attention or subjection to rules and science. I should hope, therefore, that the natural consequence of what has been said, would be, to excite in you a desire of knowing the principles and conduct of the great masters of our art, and respect and veneration for them when known.

DISCOURSE VIII.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1778.

The principles of Art, whether Poetry or Painting, have their foundations in the mind; such as novelty, variety, and contrast; these in their excess become defects.—Simplicity, its excess disagreeable.—Rules not to be always observed in their literal sense; sufficient to preserve the spirit of the law.—Observations on the Prize Pictures.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE recommended in former* discourses, that Artists should learn their profession by endeavoring to form an idea of perfection from the different excellencies which lie dispersed in the various schools of painting. Some difficulty will still occur, to know what is beauty, and where it may be found: one would wish not to be obliged to take it entirely on the credit of fame; though to this, I acknowledge, the younger students must unavoidably submit. Any suspicion in them of the chance of their being deceived, will have more tendency to obstruct their advancement, than even an enthusiastic confidence in the perfection of their models. But to the more advanced in the art, who wish to stand on more stable and firmer ground, and to establish principles on stronger foundation than authority, however venerable or powerful, it may be safely told that there is still a higher tribunal, to which those great masters themselves must submit, and to which indeed every excellence in art must be ultimately referred. He who is ambitious to enlarge the

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boundaries of his art, must extend his views, beyond the precepts which are found in books or may be drawn from the practice of his predecessors, to a knowledge of those precepts in the mind, those operations of intellectual nature,—to which every thing that aspires to please, must be proportioned and accommodated.

Poetry having a more extensive power than our art, exerts its influence over almost all the passions ; among those may be reckoned one of our most prevalent dispositions, anxiety for the future. Poetry operates by raising our curiosity, engaging the mind by degrees to take an interest in the event, keeping that event suspended, and surprising at last with an unexpected catastrophe.

The painter's art is more confined, and has nothing that corresponds with, or perhaps is equivalent to, this power and advantage of leading the mind on, till attention is totally engaged. What is done by Painting, must be done at one blow ; curiosity has received at once all the satisfaction it can ever have. There are, however, other intellectual qualities and dispositions which the Painter can satisfy and affect as powerfully as the poet ; among those we may reckon our love of novelty, variety, and contrast ; these qualities, on examination, will be found to refer to a certain activity and restlessness which has a pleasure and delight in being exercised and put in motion. Art, therefore, only administers to those wants and desires of the mind.

It requires no long disquisition to show, that the dispositions which I have stated actually subsist in the human mind. Variety re-animates the attention, which is apt to languish under a continual sameness. Novelty makes a more forcible impression on the mind, than can be made by the representation of what we have often seen before ; and

contrasts rouse the power of comparison by opposition. All this is obvious; but, on the other hand, it must be remembered, that the mind, though an active principle, has likewise a disposition to indolence; and though it loves exercise, loves it only to a certain degree, beyond which it is very unwilling to be led, or driven; the pursuit therefore of novelty and variety may be carried to excess. When variety entirely destroys the pleasure proceeding from uniformity and repetition, and when novelty counteracts and shuts out the pleasure arising from old habits and customs, they oppose too much the indolence of our disposition: the mind, therefore, can bear with pleasure but a small portion of novelty at a time. The main part of the work must be in the mode to which we have been used. An affection to old habits and customs I take to be the predominant disposition of the mind, and novelty comes as an exception; where all is novelty, the attention, the exercise of the mind is too violent. Contrast, in the same manner, when it exceeds certain limits, is as disagreeable as a violent and perpetual opposition; it gives to the senses, in their progress, a more sudden change than they can bear with pleasure.

It is then apparent, that those qualities, however they contribute to the perfection of Art, when kept within certain bounds, if they are carried to excess, become defects, and require correction: a work, consequently, will not proceed better and better as it is more varied; variety can never be the ground-work and principle of the performance—it must be only employed to recreate and relieve.

To apply these general observations which belong equally to all arts, to ours in particular. In a composition, when the objects are scattered and divided into many equal parts, the eye is perplexed and fatigued, from not knowing

where to find the principal action, or which is the principal figure ; for where all are making equal pretensions to notice, all are in equal danger of neglect.

The expression which is used very often, on these occasions is, the piece wants repose ; a word which perfectly expresses a relief of the mind from that state of hurry and anxiety which it suffers, when looking at a work of this character.

On the other hand, absolute unity, that is, a large work, consisting of one group or mass of light only, would be as defective as an heroic poem without episode, or any collateral incidents to recreate the mind with that variety which it always requires.

An instance occurs to me of two painters, (Rembrandt and Poussin,) of characters totally opposite to each other in every respect, but in nothing more than in their mode of composition, and management of light and shadow. Rembrandt's manner is absolute unity ; he often has but one group, and exhibits little more than one spot of light in the midst of a large quantity of shadow : if he has a second mass, that second bears no proportion to the principal. Poussin, on the contrary, has scarce any principal mass of light at all, and his figures are often too much dispersed, without sufficient attention to place them in groups.

The conduct of these two painters is entirely the reverse of what might be expected from their general style and character ; the works of Poussin being as much distinguished for simplicity, as those of Rembrandt for combination. Even this conduct of Poussin might proceed from too great an affection to simplicity of *another kind* ; too great a desire to avoid that ostentation of art, with regard to light and shadow, on which Rembrandt so much wished to draw the attention ;

however, each of them ran into contrary extremes, and it is difficult to determine which is the most reprehensible, both being equally distant from the demands of nature, and the purposes of art.

The same just moderation must be observed in regard to ornaments; nothing will contribute more to destroy repose than profusion, of whatever kind, whether it consists in the multiplicity of objects, or the variety and brightness of colors. On the other hand, a work without ornament, instead of simplicity, to which it makes pretensions, has rather the appearance of poverty. The degree to which ornaments are admissible must be regulated by the professed style of the work; but we may be sure of this truth—that the most ornamental style requires repose to set off even its ornaments to advantage. I can not avoid mentioning here an instance of repose, in that faithful and accurate painter of nature, Shakspeare; the short dialogue between Duncan and Banquo, whilst they are approaching the gates of Macbeth's castle. Their conversation very naturally turns upon the beauty of its situation, and the pleasantness of the air: and Banquo, observing the martlets' nests in every recess of the cornice, remarks, that where those birds most breed and haunt, the air is delicate. The subject of this quiet and easy conversation gives that repose so necessary to the mind, after the tumultuous bustle of the preceding scenes, and perfectly contrasts the scene of horror that immediately succeeds. It seems as if Shakspeare asked himself, what is a prince likely to say to his attendants on such an occasion? The modern writers seem, on the contrary, to be always searching for new thoughts, such as never could occur to man in the situation represented. This is also frequently the practice of Ho-

mer; who, from the midst of battles and horrors, relieves and refreshes the mind of the reader, by introducing some quiet rural image, or picture of familiar domestic life. The writers of every age and country, where taste has begun to decline, paint and adorn every object they touch; are always on the stretch; never deviate or sink a moment from the pompous and the brilliant. Lucan, Statius, and Claudian, (as a learned critic has observed,) are examples of this bad taste and want of judgment: they never soften their tones, or condescend to be natural; all is exaggeration and perpetual splendor, without affording repose of any kind.

As we are speaking of excesses, it will not be remote from our purpose to say a few words upon simplicity; which, in one of the senses in which it is used, is considered as the general corrector of excess. We shall at present forbear to consider it as implying that exact conduct which proceeds from an intimate knowledge of simple unadulterated nature, as it is then only another word for perfection, which neither stops short of, nor oversteps, reality and truth.

In our inquiry after simplicity, as in many other inquiries of this nature, we can best explain what is right, by showing what is wrong; and, indeed, in this case it seems to be absolutely necessary: simplicity, being only a negative virtue, can not be described or defined. We must therefore explain its nature, and show the advantage and beauty which is derived from it, by showing the deformity which proceeds from its neglect.

Though instances of this neglect might be expected to be found in practice, we should not expect to find in the works of critics, precepts that bid defiance to simplicity

and every thing that relates to it. Du Piles recommends to us portrait painters, to add grace and dignity to the characters of those whose pictures we draw: so far, he is undoubtedly right; but, unluckily, he descends to particulars, and gives his own idea of grace and dignity; "*If,*" says he, "*you draw persons of high character and dignity, they ought to be drawn in such an attitude that the Portraits must seem to speak to us of themselves; and, as it were, to say to us, 'Stop, take notice of me, I am that invincible King, surrounded by Majesty: 'I am that valiant commander, who struck terror every where: 'I am that great minister, who knew all the springs of politics: 'I am that magistrate of consummate wisdom and probity.'*" He goes on in this manner with all the characters he can think on. We may contrast the tumor of this presumptuous loftiness with the natural, unaffected air of the portraits of Titian, where dignity, seeming to be natural and inherent, draws spontaneous reverence, and instead of being thus vainly assumed, has the appearance of an unalienable adjunct; whereas such pompous and labored insolence of grandeur is so far from creating respect, that it betrays vulgarity and meanness, and new-acquired consequence.

The painters, many of them at least, have not been backward in adopting the notions contained in these precepts. The portraits of Rigaud are perfect examples of an implicit observance of these rules of Du Piles; so that though he was a painter of great merit in many respects, yet that merit is entirely overpowered by a total absence of simplicity in every sense.

Not to multiply instances, which might be produced for this purpose, from the works of history painters, I shall

mention only one—a picture which I have seen, of the Supreme Being, by Coypell.

This subject the Roman Catholic painters have taken the liberty to represent, however indecent the attempt, and however obvious the impossibility of any approach to an adequate representation; but here the air and character which the Painter has given, and he has doubtless given the highest he could conceive, are so degraded by an attempt at such dignity as Du Piles has recommended, that we are enraged at the folly and presumption of the artist, and consider it as little less than profanation.

As we have passed to a neighboring nation for instances of want of this quality, we must acknowledge at the same time, that they have produced great examples of simplicity, in Poussin and Le Sueur. But as we are speaking of the most refined and subtle notion of perfection, may we not inquire, whether a curious eye can not discern some faults, even in those great men? I can fancy, that even Poussin, by abhorring that affectation and that want of simplicity, which he observed in his countrymen, has, in certain particulars, fallen into the contrary extreme, so far as to approach to a kind of affectation: to what, in writing would be called pedantry.

When simplicity, instead of being a corrector, seems to set up for herself; that is, when an artist seems to value himself solely upon this quality; such an ostentatious display of simplicity becomes then as disagreeable and nauseous as any other kind of affectation. He is, however, in this case, likely enough to sit down contented with his own work, for though he finds the world look at it with indifference or dislike, as being destitute of every quality that can recreate or give pleasure to the mind, yet he consoles him-

self that it has simplicity, a beauty of too pure and chaste a nature to be relished by vulgar minds

It is in art as in morals; no character would inspire us with an enthusiastic admiration of his virtue, if that virtue consisted only in an absence of vice; something more is required: a man must do more than merely his duty, to be a hero.

Those works of the ancients, which are in the highest esteem, have something beside mere simplicity to recommend them. The Apollo, the Venus, the Laocoon, the Gladiator, have a certain composition of action, have contrasts sufficient to give grace and energy in a high degree; but it must be confessed of the many thousand antique statues which we have, that their general characteristic is bordering at least on inanimate insipidity.

Simplicity, when so very inartificial as to seem to evade the difficulties of art, is a very suspicious virtue.

I do not, however, wish to degrade simplicity from the high estimation in which it has been ever justly held. It is our barrier against that great enemy to truth and nature, Affectation, which is ever clinging to the pencil, and ready to drop in and poison every thing it touches.

Our love and affection to simplicity proceeds in a great measure from our aversion to every kind of affectation. There is likewise another reason why so much stress is laid upon this virtue; the propensity which artists have to fall into the contrary extreme; we therefore set a guard on that side which is most assailable. When a young artist is first told that his composition and his attitudes must be contrasted, that he must turn the head contrary to the position of the body, in order to produce grace and animation; that his outline must be undulating, and swelling, to give

grandeur; and that the eye must be gratified with a variety of colors; when he is told this, with certain animating words of Spirit, Dignity, Energy, Grace, greatness of Style, and brilliancy of Tints, he becomes suddenly vain of his newly acquired knowledge, and never thinks he can carry those rules too far. It is then that the aid of simplicity ought to be called in to correct the exuberance of youthful ardor.

The same may be said in regard to coloring, which in its pre-eminence is particularly applied to flesh. An artist in his first essay of imitating nature, would make the whole mass of one color, as the oldest painters did; till he is taught to observe not only the variety of tints, which are in the object itself, but the differences produced by the gradual decline of light to shadow; he then immediately puts his instruction in practice, and introduces a variety of distinct colors. He must then be again corrected and told, that though there is this variety, yet the effect of the whole upon the eye must have the union and simplicity of the coloring of nature.

And here we may observe, that the progress of an individual student bears a great resemblance to the progress and advancement of the Art itself. Want of simplicity would probably be not one of the defects of an artist who had studied nature only, as it was not of the old masters, who lived in the time preceding the great Art of Painting; on the contrary, their works are too simple and too in-artificial.

The Art in its infancy, like the first work of a student, was dry, hard, and simple. But this kind of barbarous simplicity would be better named Penury, as it proceeds from mere want; from want of knowledge, want of

resources, want of abilities to be otherwise ; their simplicity was the offspring, not of choice, but necessity.

In the second stage they were sensible of this poverty ; and those who were the most sensible of the want, were the best judges of the measure of the supply. There were painters who immersed from poverty without falling into luxury. Their success induced others, who probably never would of themselves have had strength of mind to discover the original defect, to endeavor at the remedy by an abuse ; and they ran into the contrary extreme. But however they may have strayed, we can not recommend to them to return to that simplicity which they have justly quitted ; but to deal out their abundance with a more sparing hand, with that dignity which makes no parade, either of its riches, or of its art. It is not easy to give a rule which may serve to fix this just and correct medium ; because when we may have fixed, or nearly fixed the middle point, taken as a general principle, circumstances may oblige us to depart from it, either on the side of Simplicity, or on that of Variety and Decoration.

I thought it necessary in a former discourse, speaking of the difference of the sublime and ornamental style of painting,—in order to excite your attention to the more manly, noble, and dignified manner—to leave perhaps an impression too contemptuous of those ornamental parts of our Art, for which many have valued themselves, and many works are much valued and esteemed.

I said then, what I thought it was right at that time to say ; I supposed the disposition of young men more inclinable to splendid negligence, than perseverance in laborious application to acquire correctness : and therefore did as we do in making what is crooked straight, by bending it the contrary way, in order that it may remain straight at last.

For this purpose, then, and to correct excess or neglect of any kind, we may here add, that it is not enough that a work be learned ; it must be pleasing ; the painter must add grace to strength, if he desires to secure the first impression in his favor. Our taste has a kind of sensuality about it, as well as a love of the sublime ; both these qualities of the mind are to have their proper consequence, as far as they do not counteract each other ; for that is the grand error which much care ought to be taken to avoid.

There are some rules, whose absolute authority, like that of our nurses, continues no longer than while we are in a state of childhood. One of the first rules, for instance, that I believe every master would give to a young pupil, respecting his conduct and management of light and shadow, would be what Lionardo da Vinci has actually given ; that you must oppose a light ground to the shadowed side of your figure, and a dark ground to the light. If Lionardo had lived to see the superior splendor and effect which has been since produced by the exactly contrary conduct,—by joining light to light and shadow to shadow,—though without doubt he would have admired it, yet, as it ought not, so probably it would not be the first rule with which he would have begun his instructions.

Again ; in the artificial management of the figures, it is directed that they shall contrast each other according to the rules generally given : that if one figure opposes his front to the spectator, the next figure is to have his back turned, and that the limbs of each individual figure be contrasted ; that is, if the right leg be put forward, the right arm is to be drawn back.

It is very proper that those rules should be given in the Academy ; it is proper the young students should be in-

formed that some research is to be made, and that they should be habituated to consider every excellence as reducible to principles. Besides, it is the natural progress of instruction to teach first what is obvious and perceptible to the senses, and from hence proceed gradually to notions large, liberal, and complete, such as comprise the more refined and higher excellencies in Art. But when students are more advanced, they will find that the greatest beauties of character and expression are produced without contrast; nay more, that this contrast would ruin and destroy that natural energy of men engaged in real action, unsolicitous of grace. St. Paul, preaching at Athens, in one of the cartoons, far from any academical contrast of limbs, stands equally on both legs, and both hands are in the same attitude: add contrast, and the whole energy and unaffected grace of the figure is destroyed. Elymas the sorcerer stretches both hands forward in the same direction, which gives perfectly the expression intended. Indeed you never will find in the works of Raffaele any of those school-boy affected contrasts. Whatever contrast there is, appears without any seeming agency of art, by the natural chance of things.

What has been said of the evil of excesses of all kinds, whether of simplicity, variety, or contrast, naturally suggests to the painter the necessity of a general inquiry into the true meaning and cause of rules, and how they operate on those faculties to which they are addressed: by knowing their general purpose and meaning, he will often find that he need not confine himself to the literal sense; it will be sufficient if he preserve the spirit of the law. Critical remarks are not always understood without examples: it may not be improper, therefore, to give instances where the

rule itself, though generally received, is false, or where a narrow conception of it may lead the artists into great errors.

It is given as a rule by Fresnoy, that *the principal figure of a subject must appear in the midst of the picture, under the principal light, to distinguish it from the rest.* A painter who should think himself obliged secretly to follow this rule, would encumber himself with needless difficulties; he would be confined to great uniformity of composition, and be deprived of many beauties which are incompatible with its observance. The meaning of this rule extends, or ought to extend, no further than this:—That the principal figure should be immediately distinguished at the first glance of the eye; but there is no necessity that the principal light should fall on the principal figure, or that the principal figure should be in the middle of the picture. It is sufficient that it be distinguished by its place, or by the attention of other figures pointing it out to the spectator. So far is this rule from being indispensable, that it is very seldom practised; other considerations of greater consequence often standing in the way. Examples in opposition to this rule, are found in the Cartoons, in Christ's Charge to Peter, the Preaching of St. Paul, and Elymas the Sorcerer, who is undoubtedly the principal object in that picture. In none of those compositions is the principal figure in the midst of the picture. In the very admirable composition of the Tent of Darius, by Le Brun, Alexander is not in the middle of the picture, nor does the principal light fall on him; but the attention of all the other figures immediately distinguishes him, and distinguishes him more properly; the greatest light falls on the daughter of Darius, who is in the middle of the picture, where it is more necessary the principal light should be placed.

It is very extraordinary that Felibien, who has given a very minute description of this picture, but indeed such a description as may be called rather panegyric than criticism, thinking it necessary (according to the precept of Fresnoy) that Alexander should possess the principal light, has accordingly given it to him; he might with equal truth have said that he was placed in the middle of the picture, as he seemed resolved to give this piece every kind of excellence which he conceived to be necessary to perfection. His generosity is here unluckily misapplied, as it would have destroyed, in a great measure, the beauty of the composition.

Another instance occurs to me, where equal liberty may be taken in regard to the management of light. Though the general practice is, to make a large mass about the middle of the picture surrounded by shadow, the reverse may be practised, and the spirit of the rule may still be preserved. Examples of this principle reversed may be found very frequently in the works of the Venetian School. In the great composition of Paul Veronese, *THE MARRIAGE AT CANA*, the figures are, for the most part, in half shadow; the great light is in the sky; and indeed, the general effect of this picture, which is so striking, is no more than what we often see in landscapes, in small pictures of fairs and country feasts; but those principles of light and shadow, being transferred to a large scale, to a space containing near a hundred figures as large as life, and conducted to all appearance with as much facility, and with an attention as steadily fixed upon *the whole together*, as if it were a small picture immediately under the eye, the work justly excites our admiration; the difficulty being increased as the extent is enlarged.

The various modes of composition are infinite ; sometimes it shall consist of one large group in the middle of the picture, and the smaller groups on each side ; or a plain space in the middle, and the groups of figures ranked round this vacuity.

Whether this principal broad light be in the middle space of ground, as in *THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS* ; or in the sky, as in *THE MARRIAGE AT CANA*, in *THE ANDROMEDA*, and in most of the pictures of Paul Veronese ; or whether the light be on the groups ; whatever mode of composition is adopted, every variety and license is allowable : this only is indisputably necessary, that to prevent the eye from being distracted and confused by a multiplicity of objects of equal magnitude, those objects, whether they consist of lights, shadows, or figures, must be disposed in large masses and groups properly varied and contrasted ; that to a certain quantity of action a proportioned space of plain ground is required ; that light is to be supported by sufficient shadow ; and we may add, that a certain quantity of cold colors is necessary to give value and lustre to the warm colors : what those proportions are, can not be so well learnt by precept as by observation on pictures, and in this knowledge bad pictures will instruct as well as good. Our inquiry why pictures have a bad effect, may be as advantageous as the inquiry why they have a good effect ; each will corroborate the principles that are suggested by the other.

Though it is not my *business* to enter into the detail of our Art, yet I must take this opportunity of mentioning one of the means of producing that great effect which we observe in the works of the Venetian painters, as I think it is not generally known or observed. It ought, in my opinion, to be indispensably observed, that the masses of

light in a picture be always of a warm mellow color, yellow, red, or a yellowish-white; and that the blue; the grey, or the green colors be kept almost entirely out of these masses, and be used only to support and set off these warm colors; and for this purpose, a small proportion of cold colors will be sufficient.

Let this conduct be reversed; let the light be cold, and the surrounding colors warm, as we often see in the works of the Roman and Florentine painters, and it will be out of the power of art, even in the hands of Rubens or Titian, to make a picture splendid and harmonious.

Le Brun and Carlo Maratti were two painters of great merit, and particularly what may be called Academical Merit, but were both deficient in this management of colors; the want of observing this rule is one of the causes of that heaviness of effect which is so observable in their works. The principal light in the Picture of Le Brun, which I just now mentioned, falls on Statira, who is dressed very injudiciously in a pale blue drapery: it is true, he has heightened this blue with gold, but that is not enough; the whole picture has a heavy air, and by no means answers the expectation raised by the print. Pousin often made a spot of blue drapery, when the general hue of the picture was inclinable to brown or yellow; which shows sufficiently, that harmony of coloring was not a part of the art that had much engaged the attention of that great painter.

The conduct of Titian in the picture of BACCHUS AND ARIADNE, has been much celebrated, and justly, for the harmony of coloring. To Ariadne is given (say the critics) a red scarf, to relieve the figure from the sea, which is behind her. It is not for that reason, alone, but for another

of much greater consequence ; for the sake of the general harmony and effect of the picture. The figure of Ariadne is separated from the great group, and is dressed in blue, which added to the color of the sea, makes that quantity of cold color which Titian thought necessary for the support and brilliancy of the great group ; which group is composed, with very little exception, entirely of mellow colors. But as the picture in this case would be divided into two distinct parts, one half cold, and the other warm, it was necessary to carry some of the mellow colors of the great group into the cold part of the picture, and a part of the cold into the great group ; accordingly Titian gave Ariadne a red scarf, and to one of the Bacchante a little blue drapery.

The light of the picture, as I observed, ought to be of a warm color ; for though white may be used for the principal light, as was the practice of many of the Dutch and Flemish painters, yet it is better to suppose *that white* illuminated by the yellow rays of the setting sun, as was the manner of Titian. The superiority of which manner is never more striking than when in a collection of pictures we chance to see a portrait of Titian's hanging by the side of a Flemish picture (even though that should be of the hand of Vandyck) which, however admirable in other respects, becomes cold and grey in the comparison.

The illuminated parts of objects are in nature of a warmer tint than those that are in the shade ; what I have recommended, therefore, is no more than that the same conduct be observed in the whole, which is acknowledged to be necessary in every individual part. It is presenting to the eye the same effect as that which it has been *accustomed* to feel, which, in this case, as in every other, will always produce beauty ; no principle therefore, in

our art can be more certain, or is derived from a higher source.

When I just now mentioned the supposed reason why Ariadne has part of her drapery red, gives me occasion here to observe, that this favorite quality of giving objects relief, and which Du Piles and all the Critics have considered as a requisite of the utmost importance, was not one of those objects which much engaged the attention of Titian; painters of an inferior rank have far exceeded him in producing this effect. This was a great object of attention, when art was in its infant state; as it is at present with the vulgar and ignorant, who feel the highest satisfaction in seeing a figure, which, as they say, looks as if they could walk round it. But however low I may rate this pleasure of deception, I should not oppose it, did it not oppose itself to a quality of a much higher kind, by counteracting entirely that fullness of manner which is so difficult to express in words, but which is found in perfection in the best works of Correggio, and we may add, of Rembrandt. This effect is produced by melting and losing the shadows in a ground still darker than those shadows; whereas that relief is produced by opposing and separating the ground from the figure, either by light, or shadow, or color. This conduct of in-laying, as it may be called, figures on their ground, in order to produce relief, was the practice of the old Painters, such as Andrea Mantegna, Pietro Perugino, and Albert Durer; and to these we may add the first manner of Lionardo da Vinci, Giorgione, and even Correggio; but these three were among the first who began to correct themselves in dryness of style, by no longer considering relief as a principal object. As those two qualities, relief and fullness of effect, can hardly exist together, it is not very difficult to

determine to which we ought to give the preference. An artist is obliged forever to hold a balance in his hand, by which he must determine the value of different qualities; that, when *some* fault must be committed, he may choose the least. Those painters who have best understood the art of producing a good effect, have adopted one principle that seems perfectly conformable to reason; that a part may be sacrificed for the good of the whole. Thus, whether the masses consist of light or shadow, it is necessary that they should be compact and of a pleasing shape: to this end, some parts may be made darker and some lighter, and reflections stronger than nature would warrant. Paul Veronese took great liberties of this kind. It is said, that being once asked why certain figures were painted in shade, as no cause was seen in the picture itself, he turned off the inquiry by answering, "*una nuevola che passa*," a cloud is passing, which has overshadowed them.

But I can not give a better instance of this practice than a picture which I have of Rubens; it is a representation of a Moonlight. Rubens has not only diffused more light over the picture than is in nature, but has bestowed on it those warm glowing colors by which his works are so much distinguished. It is so unlike what any other painters have given us of Moonlight that it might be easily mistaken, if he had not likewise added stars, for a fainter setting sun. Rubens thought the eye ought to be satisfied in this case, above all other considerations; he might, indeed, have made it more natural, but it would have been at the expense of what he thought of much greater consequence, the harmony proceeding from the contrast and variety of colors.

This same picture will furnish us with another instance, where we must depart from nature for a greater advantage.

The Moon in this picture does not preserve so great a superiority in regard to its lightness over the subject which it illumines, as it does in nature; this is likewise an intended deviation, and for the same reason. If Rubens had preserved the same scale of gradation of light between the Moon and the objects, which is found in nature, the picture must have consisted of one small spot of light only, and at a little distance from the picture nothing but this spot would have been seen. It may be said, indeed, that this being the case, it is a subject that ought not to be painted; but then, for the same reason, neither armor, nor any thing shining, ought ever to be painted; for though pure white is used in order to represent the greatest light of shining objects, it will not in the picture preserve the same superiority over flesh, as it has in nature, without keeping that flesh-color of a very low tint. Rembrandt, who thought it of more consequence to paint light than the objects that are seen by it, has done this in a picture of Achilles which I have. The head is kept down to a very low tint, in order to preserve this due gradation and distinction between the armor and the face; the consequence of which is, that upon the whole, the picture is too black. Surely too much is sacrificed here to this narrow conception of nature; allowing the contrary conduct a fault, yet it must be acknowledged a less fault than making a picture so dark that it can not be seen without a peculiar light, and then with difficulty. The merit or demerit of the different conduct of Rubens and Rembrandt in those instances which I have given, is not to be determined by the narrow principles of nature, separated from its effect on the human mind. Reason and common sense tell us, that before, and above all other considerations, it is necessary that the work should be seen, not only

without difficulty or inconvenience, but with pleasure and satisfaction; and every obstacle which stands in the way of this pleasure and convenience must be removed.

The tendency of this Discourse, with the instances which have been given, is not so much to place the Artist above rules, as to teach him their reason; to prevent him from entertaining a narrow, confined conception of Art; to clear his mind from a perplexed variety of rules and their exceptions, by directing his attention to an intimate acquaintance with the passions and affections of the mind, from which all rules arise, and to which they are all referable. Art effects its purpose by their means; an accurate knowledge, therefore, of those passions and dispositions of the mind is necessary to him who desires to affect them upon sure and solid principles.

A complete essay or inquiry into the connection between the rules of Art, and the eternal and immutable dispositions of our passions, would be indeed going at once to the foundation of criticism; * but I am too well convinced what extensive knowledge, what subtle and penetrating judgment would be required, to engage in such an undertaking; it is enough for me, if in the language of painters, I have produced a slight sketch of a part of this vast composition, but that sufficiently distinct to show the usefulness of such a theory, and its practicability.

Before I conclude, I can not avoid making one observation on the pictures now before us. I have observed, that every candidate has copied the celebrated invention of Timanthes in hiding the face of Agamemnon in his mantle;

* This was inadvertently said. I did not recollect the admirable treatise *On the Sublime and Beautiful*.

indeed, such lavish encomiums have been bestowed on this thought, and that too by men of the highest character in critical knowledge,—Cicero, Quintilian, Valerius, Maximus, and Pliny,—and have been since re-echoed by almost every modern that has written on the Arts, that your adopting it can neither be wondered at, nor blamed. It appears now to be so much connected with the subject, that the spectator would perhaps be disappointed in not finding united in the picture what he always united in his mind, and considered as indispensably belonging to the subject. But it may be observed, that those who praise this circumstance were not painters. They use it as an illustration only of their own art; it served their purpose, and it was certainly not their business to enter into the objections that lie against it in another Art. I fear we have but very scanty means of exciting those powers over the imagination which make so very considerable and refined a part of poetry. It is a doubt with me, whether we should even make the attempt. The chief, if not the only occasion, which the painter has for this artifice, is, when the subject is improper to be more fully represented, either, for the sake of decency, or to avoid what would be disagreeable to be seen; and this is not to raise or increase the passions, which is the reason that is given for this practice, but on the contrary to diminish their effect.

It is true, sketches, or such drawings as painters generally make for their works, give this pleasure of imagination to a high degree. From a slight, undetermined drawing, where the ideas of the composition and character are, as I may say, only just touched upon, the imagination supplies more than the painter himself, probably, could produce; and we accordingly often find that the finished work disap-

points the expectation that was raised from the sketch; and this power of the imagination is one of the causes of the great pleasure we have in viewing a collection of drawings by great painters. These general ideas, which are expressed in sketches, correspond very well to the art often used in Poetry. A great part of the beauty of the celebrated description of Eve in Milton's *PARADISE LOST*, consists in using only general indistinct expressions, every reader making out the detail according to his own particular imagination;—his own idea of beauty, grace, expression, dignity, or loveliness: but a painter, when he represents Eve on a canvass, is obliged to give a determined form, and his own idea of beauty distinctly expressed.

We can not on this occasion, nor indeed on any other, recommend an undeterminate manner or vague ideas of any kind, in a complete and finished picture. This notion, therefore, of leaving any thing to the imagination, opposes a very fixed and indispensable rule in our art, that every thing shall be carefully and distinctly expressed, as if the painter knew, with correctness and precision, the exact form and character of whatever is introduced into the picture. This is what with us is called Science, and Learning: which must not be sacrificed and given up for an uncertain and doubtful beauty, which, not naturally belonging to our Art, will probably be sought for without success.

Mr. Falconet has observed, in a note on this passage in his translation of Pliny, that the circumstance of covering the face of Agamemnon was probably not in consequence of any fine imagination of the painter,—which he considers as a discovery of the critics,—but merely copied from the description of the sacrifice, as it is found in Euripides.

The words from which the picture is supposed to be

taken, are these: *Agamemnon saw Iphigenia advance towards the fatal altar; he groaned, he turned aside his head, he shed tears, and covered his face with his robe.*

Falconet does not at all acquiesce in the praise that is bestowed on Timanthes; not only because it is not his invention, but because he thinks meanly of this trick of concealing, except in instances of blood, where the objects would be too horrible to be seen; but, says he, "in an afflicted Father, in a King, in Agamemnon, you, who are a painter, conceal from me the most interesting circumstance, and then put me off with sophistry and a veil. You are (he adds) a feeble Painter, without resource: you do not know even those of your Art: I care not what veil it is, whether closed hands, arms raised, or any other action that conceals from me the countenance of the Hero. You think of veiling Agamemnon; you have unveiled your own ignorance. A Painter who represents Agamemnon veiled, is as ridiculous as a Poet would be, who in a pathetic situation, in order to satisfy my expectations, and rid himself of the business, should say, that the sentiments of his hero are so far above whatever can be said on the occasion, that he shall say nothing."

To what Falconet has said, we may add, that supposing this method of leaving the expression of grief to the imagination, to be, as it was thought to be, the invention of the painter, and that it deserves all the praise that has been given it, still it is a trick that will serve but once; whoever does it a second time, will not only want novelty, but be justly suspected of using artifice to evade difficulties. If difficulties overcome make a great part of the merit of Art, difficulties evaded can deserve but little commendation.

DISCOURSE IX.

*Delivered at the Opening of the Royal Academy, in Somerset Place,
October 16, 1780.*

On the removal of the Royal Academy to Somerset Place.—The advantages to Society from cultivating intellectual pleasure.

GENTLEMEN,

THE honor which the Arts acquire by being permitted to take possession of this noble habitation, is one of the most considerable of the many instances we have received of His Majesty's protection; and the strongest proof of his desire to make the Academy respectable.

Nothing has been left undone, that might contribute to excite our pursuit, or to reward our attainments. We have already the happiness of seeing the Arts in a state to which they never before arrived in this nation. This Building, in which we are now assembled, will remain to many future ages an illustrious specimen of the Architect's* abilities. It is our duty to endeavor that those who gaze with wonder at the structure may not be disappointed when they visit the apartments. It will be no small addition to the glory which this nation has already acquired from having given birth to eminent men in every part of science, if it should be enabled to produce, in consequence of this institution, a School of English Artists. The estimation in which we stand in respect to our neighbors, will be in proportion to the degree in which we excel or are inferior to them in the acquisition of intellectual excel-

* Sir William Chambers.

lence, of which Trade and its consequential riches must be acknowledged to give the means; but a people whose whole attention is absorbed in those means, and who forget the end, can aspire but little above the rank of a barbarous nation. Every establishment that tends to the cultivation of the pleasures of the mind, as distinct from those of sense, may be considered as an inferior school of morality, where the mind is polished and prepared for higher attainments.

Let us for a moment take a short survey of the progress of the mind towards what is, or ought to be, its true object of attention. Man, in his lowest state, has no pleasures but those of sense, and no wants but those of appetite; afterwards, when society is divided into different ranks, and some are appointed to labor for the support of others, those whom their superiority sets free from labor begin to look for intellectual entertainments. Thus, whilst the shepherds were attending their flocks, their masters made the first astronomical observations; so music is said to have had its origin from a man at leisure listening to the strokes of a hammer.

As the senses, in the lowest state of nature, are necessary to direct us to our support, when that support is once secure there is danger in following them further; to him who has no rule of action but the gratification of the senses, plenty is always dangerous: it is therefore necessary to the happiness of individuals, and still more necessary to the security of society, that the mind should be elevated to the idea of general beauty, and the contemplation of general truth: by this pursuit the mind is always carried forward in search of something more excellent than it finds, and obtains its proper superiority over the common

senses of life, by learning to feel itself capable of higher aims and nobler enjoyments. In this gradual exaltation of human nature, every art contributes its contingent towards the general supply of mental pleasure. Whatever abstracts the thoughts from sensual gratifications, whatever teaches us to look for happiness within ourselves, must advance in some measure the dignity of our nature.

Perhaps there is no higher proof of the excellency of man than this—that to a mind properly cultivated whatever is bounded is little. The mind is continually laboring to advance, step by step, through successive gradations of excellence, towards perfection, which is dimly seen, at a great, though not hopeless, distance, and which we must always follow, because we never can attain; but the pursuit rewards itself; one truth teaches another, and our store is always ~~increasing~~ increasing, though nature can never be exhausted. Our art, like all arts which address the imagination, is applied to a somewhat lower faculty of the mind, which approaches nearer to sensuality: but through sense and fancy it must make its way to reason; for such is the progress of thought, that we perceive by sense, we combine by fancy, and distinguish by reason: and without carrying our art out of its natural and true character, the more we purify it from every thing that is gross in sense, in that proportion we advance its use and dignity; and in proportion as we lower it to mere sensuality, we pervert its nature, and degrade it from the rank of a liberal art; and this is what every artist ought well to remember. Let him remember also, that he deserves just so much encouragement in the state as he makes himself a member of it virtuously useful, and contributes in his sphere to the general purpose and perfection of society.

The Art which we profess has beauty for its object; this it is our business to discover and to express; the beauty of which we are in quest is general and intellectual; it is an idea that subsists only in the mind; the sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it; it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist, which he is always laboring to impart, and which he dies at last without imparting; but which he is yet so far able to communicate as to raise the thoughts, and extend the views of the spectator; and which, by a succession of art, may be so far diffused that its effects may extend themselves imperceptibly into public benefits, and be among the means of bestowing on whole nations refinement of taste: which, if it does not lead directly to purity of manners, obviates at least their greatest depravation, by disentangling the mind from appetite, and conducting the thoughts through successive stages of excellence, till that contemplation of universal rectitude and harmony which began by Taste, may, as it is exalted and refined, conclude in Virtue.

DISCOURSE X.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 11, 1780.

Sculpture :—has but one style.—Its objects, form, and character.—Ineffectual attempts of the modern Sculptors to improve the art.—Ill effects of modern dress in Sculpture.

GENTLEMEN,

I SHALL now, as it has been customary on this day, and on this occasion, communicate to you such observations as have occurred to me on the Theory of Art.

If these observations have hitherto referred principally to Painting, let it be remembered that this Art is much more extensive and complicated than Sculpture, and affords therefore a more ample field for criticism; and as the greater includes the less, the leading principles of Sculpture are comprised in those of Painting.

However, I wish now to make some remarks with particular relation to Sculpture; to consider wherein, or in what manner, its principles and those of Painting agree or differ; what is within its power of performing, and what it is vain or improper to attempt; that it may be clearly and distinctly known what ought to be the great purpose of the Sculptor's labors.

Sculpture is an art of much more simplicity and uniformity than Painting; it can not, with propriety and the best effect, be applied to many subjects. The object of its pursuit may be comprised in two words, Form and Character; and those qualities are presented to us but in one manner, or in one style only; whereas the powers of

Painting, as they are more various and extensive, so they are exhibited in as great a variety of manners. The Roman, Lombard, Florentine, Venetian, and Flemish Schools, all pursue the same end by different means. But Sculpture having but one style, can only to one style of Painting have any relation; and to this (which is indeed the highest and most dignified that Painting can boast,) it has a relation so close that it may be said to be almost the same art operating upon different materials. The Sculptors of the last age, from not attending sufficiently to this discrimination of the different styles of Painting, have been led into many errors. Though they well knew that they were allowed to imitate, or take ideas for the improvement of their own Art from the grand style of Painting, they were not aware that it was not permitted to borrow in the same manner from the ornamental. When they endeavor to copy the picturesque effects, contrasts, or petty excellencies of whatever kind, which not improperly find a place in the inferior branches of Painting, they doubtless imagine themselves improving and extending the boundaries of their art by this imitation; but they are in reality violating its essential character, by giving a different direction to its operations, and proposing to themselves either what is unattainable, or at best a meaner object of pursuit. The grave and austere character of Sculpture requires the utmost degree of formality in composition; picturesque contrasts have here no place; every thing is carefully weighed and measured, one side making almost an exact equipoise to the other: a child is not a proper balance to a full grown figure, nor is a figure sitting or stooping a companion to an upright figure.

The excellence of every art must consist in the com-

plete accomplishment of its purpose; and if, by a false imitation of nature, or mean ambition of producing a picturesque effect or illusion of any kind, all the grandeur of ideas which this art endeavors to excite, be degraded or destroyed, we may boldly oppose ourselves to any such innovation. If the producing of a deception is the summit of this art, let us at once give to statues the addition of color; which will contribute more towards accomplishing this end, than all those artifices which have been introduced and professedly defended, on no other principle but that of rendering the work more natural. But as color is universally rejected, every practice liable to the same objection must fall with it. If the business of Sculpture were to administer pleasure to ignorance, or a mere entertainment to the senses, the Venus of Medicis might certainly receive much improvement by color; but the character of Sculpture makes it her duty to afford delight of a different, and, perhaps, of a higher kind; the delight resulting from the contemplation of perfect beauty: and this, which is in truth an intellectual pleasure, is in many respects incompatible with what is merely addressed to the senses, such as that with which ignorance and levity contemplate elegance of form.

The Sculptor may be safely allowed to practice every means within the power of his art to produce a deception, provided this practice does not interfere with or destroy higher excellencies; on these conditions he will be forced, however loth, to acknowledge that the boundaries of his art have long been fixed, and that all endeavors will be vain that hope to pass beyond the best works which remain of ancient Sculpture.

Imitation is the means, and not the end of art: it is

employed by the Sculptor as the language by which his ideas are presented to the mind of the spectator. Poetry and elocution of every sort make use of signs, but those signs are arbitrary and conventional. The sculptor employs the representation of the thing itself; but still as a means to a higher end—as a gradual ascent always advancing towards faultless form and perfect beauty. It may be thought at the first view, that even this form, however perfectly represented, is to be valued and take its rank only for the sake of a still higher object, that of conveying sentiment and character, as they are exhibited by attitude, and expression of the passions. But we are sure from experience, that the beauty of form alone, without the assistance of any other quality, makes of itself a great work, and justly claims our esteem and admiration. As a proof of the high value we set on the mere excellence of form, we may produce the greatest part of the works of Michael Angelo, both in painting and sculpture as well as most of the antique statues, which are justly esteemed in a very high degree, though no very marked or striking character or expression of any kind is represented.

But, as a stronger instance that this excellence alone inspires sentiment, what artist ever looked at the Torso without feeling a warmth of enthusiasm, as from the highest efforts of poetry? From whence does this proceed? What is there in this fragment that produces this effect, but the perfection of this science of abstract form?

A mind elevated to the contemplation of excellence, perceives in this defaced and shattered fragment, *disjecta membra poetæ*, the traces of superlative genius, the reliques of a work on which succeeding ages can only gaze with inadequate admiration.

It may be said that this pleasure is reserved only to those who have spent their whole life in the study and contemplation of this art ; but the truth is, that all would feel its effects, if they could divest themselves of the expectation of *deception*, and look only for what it really is, a *partial* representation of nature. The only impediment of their judgment must then proceed from their being uncertain to what rank, or rather kind of excellence, it aspires ; and to what sort of approbation it has a right. This state of darkness is, without doubt, irksome to every mind ; but by attention to works of this kind the knowledge of what is aimed at comes of itself, without being taught, and almost without being perceived.

The Sculptor's art is limited in comparison of others, but it has its variety and intricacy within its proper bounds. Its essence is correctness : and when to correct and perfect form is added the ornament of grace, dignity of character, and appropriate expression, as in the Apollo, the Venus, the Laocoon, the Moses of Michael Angelo, and many others, this art may be said to have accomplished its purpose.

What Grace is, how it is to be acquired or conceived, are in speculation difficult questions ; but *causa latet, res est notissima* : without any perplexing inquiry, the effect is hourly perceived. I shall only observe, that its natural foundation is correctness of design ; and though grace may be sometimes united with incorrectness, it can not proceed from it.

But to come nearer to our present subject. It has been said that the grace of the Apollo depends on a certain degree of incorrectness ; that the head is not anatomically placed between the shoulders ; and that the lower half of the figure is longer than just proportion allows.

I know that Correggio and Parmegiano are often produced

as authorities to support this opinion ; but very little attention will convince us, that the incorrectness of some parts which we find in their works, does not contribute to grace, but rather tends to destroy it. The Madonna, with the sleeping Infant, and beautiful group of Angels, by Parmegiano, in the Palazzo Pitti, would not have lost any of its excellence, if the neck, fingers, and indeed the whole figure of the Virgin, instead of being so very long and incorrect, had preserved their due proportion.

In opposition to the first of these remarks, I have the authority of a very able Sculptor of this Academy, who has copied that figure, consequently measured and carefully examined it, to declare, that the criticism is not true. In regard to the last, it must be remembered that Apollo is here in the exertion of one of his peculiar powers, which is swiftness ; he has therefore that proportion which is best adapted to that character. This is no more incorrectness, than when there is given to an Hercules an extraordinary swelling and strength of muscles.

The art of discovering and expressing grace is difficult enough of itself, without perplexing ourselves with what is incomprehensible. A supposition of such a monster as Grace, begot by Deformity, is poison to the mind of a young Artist, and may make him neglect what is essential to his art, correctness of Design, in order to pursue a phantom, which has no existence but in the imagination of affected and refined speculators.

I can not quit the Apollo, without making one observation on the character of this figure. He is supposed to have just discharged his arrow at the Python ; and, by the head retreating a little toward the right shoulder, he appears attentive to its effect. What I would remark is the difference

of this attention from that of the Discobolus, who is engaged in the same purpose, watching the effect of his Discus. The graceful, negligent, though animated, air of the one, and the vulgar eagerness of the other, furnish a signal instance of the judgment of ancient sculptors in their nice discrimination of character. They are both equally true to nature and equally admirable.

It may be remarked, that Grace, Character, and Expression, though words of different sense and meaning, and so understood when applied to the works of Painters, are indiscriminately used when we speak of Sculpture. This indecision we may suspect to proceed from the undetermined effects of the Art itself; those qualities are exhibited in Sculpture rather by form and attitude, than by the features, and can therefore be expressed but in a very general manner.

Though the Laocoon and his two sons have more expression in the countenance than perhaps any other antique statues, yet it is only the general expression of pain; and this passion is still more strongly expressed by the writhing and contortion of the body than by the features.

It has been observed in a late publication, that if the attention of the Father in this group had been occupied more by the distress of his children, than by his own sufferings, it would have raised a much greater interest in the spectator. Though this observation comes from a person whose opinion, in every thing relating to the Arts, carries with it the highest authority, yet I can not but suspect that such refined expression is scarce within the province of this Art; and in attempting it, the Artist will run great risk of enfeebling expression, and making it less intelligible to the spectator.

As the general figure presents itself in a more conspicuous manner than the features, it is there we must principally look for expression or character; *patuit in corpore vultus*; and, in this respect, the Sculptor's art is not unlike that of dancing, where the attention of the spectator is principally engaged by the attitude and action of the performer; and it is there he must look for whatever expression that art is capable of exhibiting. The dancers themselves acknowledge this, by often wearing masks, with little diminution in the expression. The face bears so very inconsiderable a proportion to the effect of the whole figure, that the ancient Sculptors neglected to animate the features, even with the general expression of the passions. Of this the group of the Boxers is a remarkable instance; they are engaged in the most animated action with the greatest serenity of countenance. This is not recommended for imitation (for there can be no reason why the countenance should not correspond with the attitude and expression of the figure,) but is mentioned in order to infer from hence, that this frequent deficiency in ancient Sculpture could proceed from nothing but a habit of inattention to what was considered as comparatively immaterial.

Those who think Sculpture can express more than we have allowed, may ask, by what means we discover, at the first glance, the character that is represented in a Bust, Cameo, or Intaglio? I suspect it will be found, on close examination, by him who is resolved not to see more than he really does see, that the figures are distinguished by their *insignia* more than by any variety of form or beauty. Take from Apollo his Lyre, from Bacchus his Thirsus and Vine-leaves, and Meleager the Boar's Head, and there will remain little or no difference in their characters. In a Juno,

Minerva, or *Flora*, the idea of the artist seems to have gone no further than representing perfect beauty, and afterwards adding the proper attributes, with a total indifference to which they gave them. Thus John de Bologna, after he had finished a group of a young man holding up a young woman in his arms, with an old man at his feet, called his friends together, to tell him what name he should give it, and it was agreed to call it *The Rape of the Sabines**; and this is the celebrated group which now stands before the old Palace at Florence. The figures have the same general expression which is to be found in most of the antique Sculpture; and yet it would be no wonder if future critics should find out delicacy of expression which was never intended; and go so far as to see in the old man's countenance the exact relation which he bore to the woman who appears to be taken from him.

Though Painting and Sculpture are, like many other arts, governed by the same general principles, yet in the detail, or what may be called the by-laws of each art, there seems to be no longer any connection between them. The different materials upon which those two arts exert their powers, must infallibly create a proportional difference in their practice. There are many petty excellencies which the Painter attains with ease, but which are impracticable in Sculpture; and which, even if it could accomplish them, would add nothing to the true value and dignity of the work.

Of the ineffectual attempts which the modern Sculptors have made by way of improvement, these seem to be the principal:

* See "*Il Reposo di Raffaello Borghini*."

The practice of detaching drapery from the figure, in order to give the appearance of flying in the air ;

Of making different plans in the same bas-relieves ;

Of attempting to represent the effects of perspective :

To these we may add the ill effect of figures clothed in a modern dress.

The folly of attempting to make stone sport and flutter in the air, is so apparent, that it carries with it its own reprehension ; and yet to accomplish this, seemed to be the great ambition of many modern Sculptors, particularly Bernini : his art was so much set on overcoming this difficulty, that he was for ever attempting it, though by that attempt he risked every thing that was valuable in the art.

Bernini stands in the first class of modern Sculptors, and therefore it is the business of criticism to prevent the ill effects of so powerful an example.

From his very early work of Apollo and Daphne, the world justly expected he would rival the best productions of ancient Greece ; but he soon strayed from the right path. And though there is in his works something which always distinguishes him from the common herd, yet he appears in his latter performances to have lost his way. Instead of pursuing the study of that ideal beauty with which he had so successfully begun, he turned his mind to an injudicious quest of novelty, attempted what was not within the province of the art, and endeavored to overcome the hardness and obstinacy of his materials ; which even supposing he had accomplished, so far as to make this species of drapery appear natural, the ill effect and confusion occasioned by its being detached from the figure to which it belongs, ought to have been alone a sufficient reason to have deterred him from that practice.

We have not, I think, in our Academy, any of Bernini's works, except a cast of the head of his Neptune.* this will be sufficient to serve us for an example of the mischief produced by this attempt of representing the effects of the wind. The locks of the hair are flying abroad in all directions, insomuch that it is not a superficial view that can discover what the object is which is represented, or distinguish those flying locks from the features, as they are all of the same color, of equal solidity, and consequently project with equal force.

The same entangled confusion which is here occasioned by the hair, is produced by drapery flying off; which the eye must, for the same reason, inevitably mingle and confound with the principal parts of the figure.

It is a general rule, equally true in both Arts, that the form and attitude of the figure should be seen clearly, and without any ambiguity, at the first glance of the eye. This the Painter can easily do by color, by losing parts in the ground, or keeping them so obscure as to prevent them from interfering with the more principal objects. The sculptor has no other means of preventing this confusion than by attaching the drapery for the greater part close to the figure; the folds of which, following the order of the limbs, whenever the drapery is seen, the eye is led to trace the form and attitude of the figure at the same time.

The drapery of the Apollo, though it makes a large mass, and is separated from the figure, does not affect the present question, from the very circumstance of its being so completely separated; and from the regularity and sim-

* Some years after this Discourse was written, Bernini's Neptune was purchased for our author at Rome, and brought to England. After his death it was sold by his executors for £500 to Charles Anderson Pelham, Esq., now Lord Yarborough.

plicity of its form, it does not in the least interfere with a distinct view of the figure. In reality, it is no more a part of it than a pedestal, a trunk of a tree, or an animal, which we often see joined to statues.

The principal use of those appendages is to strengthen and preserve the statue from accidents; and many are of opinion, that the mantle which falls from the Apollo's arm is for the same end; but surely it answers a much greater purpose, by preventing that dryness of effect which would inevitably attend a naked arm, extended almost at full length, to which we may add, the disagreeable effect which would proceed from the body and arm making a right angle.

The Apostles, in the church of St. John Lateran, appear to me to fall under the censure of an injudicious imitation of the manner of the painters. The drapery of those figures, from being disposed in large masses, gives undoubtedly that air of grandeur which magnitude or quantity is sure to produce. But though it should be acknowledged, that it is managed with great skill and intelligence, and contrived to appear as light as the materials will allow, yet the weight and solidity of stone was not to be overcome.

Those figures are much in the style of Carlo Maratti, and such as we may imagine he would have made, if he had attempted Sculpture; and when we know he had the superintendence of that work, and was an intimate friend of one of the principal Sculptors, we may suspect that his taste had some influence, if he did not even give the designs. No man can look at those figures without recognising the manner of Carlo Maratti. They have the same defect which his works so often have, of being overlaid

with drapery, and that too artificially disposed. I can not but believe, that if Rusconi, Le Gros, Monot, and the rest of the Sculptors employed in that work, had taken for their guide the simple dress, such as we see in the antique statues of the philosophers, it would have given more real grandeur to their figures, and would certainly have been more suitable to the characters of the Apostles.

Though there is no remedy for the ill effect of those solid projections which flying drapery in stone must always produce in statues, yet in bas-reliefs it is totally different; those detached parts of drapery the Sculptor has here as much power over as the Painter, by uniting and losing it in the ground, so that it shall not in the least entangle and confuse the figure.

But here again the Sculptor, not content with this successful imitation, if it may be so called, proceeds to represent figures or groups of figures on different plans; that is, some on the foreground, and some at a greater distance, in the manner of Painters in historical compositions. To do this he has no other means than by making the distant figures of less dimensions, and relieving them in a less degree from the surface; but this is not adequate to the end; they will still appear only as figures on a less scale, but equally near the eye with those in the front of the piece.

Nor does the mischief of this attempt, which never accomplishes its intention, rest here: by this division of the work into many minute parts, the grandeur of its general effect is inevitably destroyed.

Perhaps the only circumstance in which the Modern have excelled the Ancient Sculptors, is the management of a single group in basso-relievo; the art of gradually

raising the group from the flat surface, till it imperceptibly emerges in alto-relievo. Of this there is no ancient example remaining that discovers any approach to the skill which Le Gros has shown in an altar in the Jesuits' Church at Rome. Different plans or degrees of relief in the same group have, as we see in this instance, a good effect, though the contrary happens when the groups are separated, and are at some distance behind each other.

This improvement in the art of composing a group in basso-relievo was probably first suggested by the practice of the modern Painters, who relieve their figures, or groups of figures, from their ground, by the same gentle gradation; and it is accomplished in every respect by the same general principles; but as the marble has no color, it is the composition itself that must give its light and shadow. The ancient Sculptors could not borrow this advantage from their Painters, for this was an art with which they appear to have been entirely unacquainted: and in the bas-relievos of Lorenzo Ghiberti, the casts of which we have in the Academy, this art is no more attempted than it was by the Painters of his age.

The next imaginary improvement of the moderns, is the representing the effects of Perspective in bas-relief. Of this, little need be said; all must recollect how ineffectual has been the attempt of modern Sculptors to turn the buildings which they have introduced as seen from their angle, with a view to make them appear to recede from the eye in perspective. This, though it may show indeed their eager desire to encounter difficulties, shows at the same time how inadequate their materials are even to this their humble ambition.

The Ancients, with great judgment, represented only

the elevation of whatever architecture they introduced into their bas-reliefs, which is composed of little more than horizontal or perpendicular lines; whereas the interruption of crossed lines, or whatever causes a multiplicity of subordinate parts, destroys that regularity and firmness of effect on which grandeur of style so much depends.

We come now to the last consideration; in what manner Statues are to be dressed, which are made in honor of men either now living or lately departed.

This is a question which might employ a long discourse of itself; I shall at present only observe, that he who wishes not to obstruct the Artist, and prevent his exhibiting his abilities to their greatest advantage, will certainly not desire a modern dress.

The desire of transmitting to posterity the shape of modern dress must be acknowledged to be purchased at a prodigious price, even the price of every thing that is valuable in art.

Working in stone is a very serious business; and it seems to be scarce worth while to employ such durable materials in conveying to posterity a fashion of which the longest existence scarce exceeds a year.

However agreeable it may be to the Antiquary's principles of equity and gratitude, that as he has received great pleasure from the contemplation of the fashions of dress of former ages, he wishes to give the same satisfaction to future Antiquaries; yet, methinks, pictures of an inferior style, or prints, may be considered as quite sufficient, without prostituting this great art to such mean purposes.

In this town may be seen an Equestrian Statue in a modern dress, which may be sufficient to deter future

artists from any such attempt: even supposing no other objection, the familiarity of the modern dress by no means agrees with the dignity and gravity of Sculpture.

Sculpture is formal, regular, and austere; disdains all familiar objects, as incompatible with its dignity; and is an enemy to every species of affectation, or appearance of academical art. All contrast, therefore, of one figure to another, or of the limbs of a single figure, or even in the folds of the drapery, must be sparingly employed. In short, whatever partakes of fancy or caprice, or goes under the denomination of Picturesque, (however to be admired in its proper place,) is incompatible with that sobriety and gravity which is peculiarly the characteristic of this art.

There is no circumstance which more distinguishes a well-regulated and sound taste, than a settled uniformity of design, where all the parts are compact, and fitted to each other, every thing being of a piece. This principle extends itself to all habits of life, as well as to all works of art. Upon this general ground, therefore, we may safely venture to pronounce, that the uniformity and simplicity of the materials on which the Sculptor labors, (which are only white marble,) prescribes bounds to his art, and teaches him to confine himself to a proportionable simplicity of design.

DISCOURSE XI.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1782.

Genius.—Consists principally in the comprehension of a whole; in taking general ideas only.

GENTLEMEN,

THE highest ambition of every Artist is to be thought a man of Genius. As long as this flattering quality is joined to his name, he can bear with patience the imputation of carelessness, incorrectness, or defects of whatever kind.

So far, indeed, is the presence of Genius from implying an absence of faults, that they are considered by many as its inseparable companions. Some go such lengths as to take indication from them, and not only excuse faults on account of Genius, but presume Genius from the existence of certain faults.

It is certainly true, that a work may justly claim the character of Genius, though full of errors; and it is equally true, that it may be faultless, and yet not exhibit the least spark of Genius. This naturally suggests an inquiry, a desire at least of inquiring, what qualities of a work and of a workman may justly entitle a Painter to that character.

I have in a former discourse* endeavored to impress you with a fixed opinion, that a comprehensive and critical knowledge of the works of nature is the only source of beauty and grandeur. But when we speak to Painters, we

* Discourse III.

must always consider this rule, and all rules, with a reference to the mechanical practice of their own particular Art. It is not properly in the learning, the taste, and the dignity of the ideas, that Genius appears as belonging to a Painter. There is a Genius particular and appropriated to his own trade, (as I may call it,) distinguished from all others. For that power, which enables the Artist to conceive his subject with dignity, may be said to belong to general education : and is as much the Genius of a Poet, or the professor of any other liberal Art, or even a good critic in any of those arts, as of a Painter. Whatever sublime ideas may fill his mind, he is a Painter, only as he can put in practice what he knows, and communicate those ideas by visible representation.

If my expression can convey my idea, I wish to distinguish excellence of this kind by calling it the Genius of mechanical performance. This Genius consists, I conceive in the power of expressing that which employs your pencil, whatever it may be, *as a whole* ; so that the general effect and power of the whole may take possession of the mind, and for a while suspend the consideration of the subordinate and particular beauties or defects.

The advantage of this method of considering objects, is what I wish now more particularly to enforce. At the same time I do not forget, that a Painter must have the power of contracting as well as dilating his sight ; because, he that does not at all express particulars, expresses nothing ; yet it is certain, that a nice discrimination of minute circumstances, and a punctilious delineation of them, whatever excellence it may have, (and I do not mean to detract from it,) never did confer on the Artist the character of Genius.

Beside those minute differences in things which are fre-

quently not observed at all, and when they are, make little impression, there are in all considerable objects great characteristic distinctions, which press strongly on the senses, and therefore fix the imagination. These are by no means, as some persons think, an aggregate of all the small discriminating particulars: nor will such an accumulation of particulars ever express them. These answer to what I have heard great lawyers call the leading points in a case, or the leading cases relative to those points.

The detail of particulars, which does not assist the expression of the main characteristic, is worse than useless, it is mischievous, as it dissipates the attention, and draws it from the principal point. It may be remarked, that the impression which is left on our mind even of things which are familiar to us, is seldom more than their general effect; beyond which we do not look in recognising such objects. To express this in Painting, is to express what is congenial and natural to the mind of man, and what gives him by reflection his own mode of conceiving. The other presupposes *nicety* and *research*, which are only the business of the curious and attentive, and therefore does not speak to the general sense of the whole species; in which common, and, as I may so call it, mother tongue, every thing grand and comprehensive must be uttered.

I do not mean to prescribe what degree of attention ought to be paid to the minute parts; this it is hard to settle. We are sure that it is expressing the general effect of the whole, which alone can give to objects their true and touching character; and wherever this is observed, whatever else may be neglected, we acknowledge the hand of a Master. We may even go further, and observe, that when the general effect only is presented to us by a skilful hand,

it appears to express the object represented in a more lively manner than the minutest resemblance would do.

These observations may lead to very deep questions, which I do not mean here to discuss ; among others, it may lead to an inquiry. Why we are not always pleased with the most absolute possible resemblance of an imitation to its original object ? Cases may exist in which such a resemblance may be even disagreeable. I shall only observe that the effect of figures in wax-work, though certainly a more exact representation than can be given by Painting or Sculpture, is a sufficient proof that the pleasure we receive from imitation is not increased merely in proportion as it approaches to minute and detailed reality ; we are pleased, on the contrary by seeing ends accomplished by seemingly inadequate means.

To express protuberance by actual relief—to express the softness of flesh by the softness of wax, seems rude and inartificial, and creates no grateful surprise. But to express distance on a plain surface, softness by hard bodies, and particular coloring by materials which are not singly of that color, produces that magic which is the prize and triumph of art.

Carry this principle a step further. Suppose the effect of imitation to be fully compassed by means still more inadequate ; let the power of a few well-chosen strokes, which supersede labor by judgment and direction, produce a complete impression of all that the mind demands in an object ; we are charmed with such an unexpected happiness of execution, and begin to be tired with the superfluous diligence, which in vain solicits an appetite already satiated.

The properties of all objects, as far as a Painter is concerned with them, are, the outline or drawing, the color,

and the light and shade. The drawing gives the form, the color its visible quality, and the light and shade its solidity.

Excellence in any one of these parts of art will never be acquired by an artist, unless he has the habit of looking upon objects at large, and observing the effect which they have on the eye when it is dilated, and employed upon the whole, without seeing any one of the parts distinctly. It is by this that we obtain the ruling characteristic, and that we learn to imitate it by short and dexterous methods. I do not mean by dexterity a trick or mechanical habit, formed by guess, and established by custom; but that science, which, by a profound knowledge of ends and means, discovers the shortest and surest way to its own purpose.

If we examine with a critical view the manner of those painters whom we consider as patterns, we shall find that their great fame does not proceed from their works being more highly finished than those of other artists, or from a more minute attention to details, but from that enlarged comprehension which sees the whole object at once, and that energy of art which gives its characteristic effect by adequate expression.

Raffaello and Titian are two names which stand the highest in our art; one for Drawing, the other for Painting. The most considerable and the most esteemed works of Raffaele are the Cartoons, and his Fresco works in the Vatican; those, as we all know, are far from being minutely finished: his principal care and attention seems to have been fixed upon the adjustment of the whole, whether it was the general composition, or the composition of each individual figure; for every figure may be said to be a lesser whole, though in regard to the general work to which it belongs, it is but a part; the same may be said of the head,

of the hands, and feet. Though he possessed this art of seeing and comprehending the whole, as far as form is concerned, he did not exert the same faculty in regard to the general effect, which is presented to the eye by color, and light and shade. Of this the deficiency of his oil pictures, where this excellence is more expected than in Fresco, is a sufficient proof.

It is to Titian we must turn our eyes to find excellence with regard to color, and light and shade, in the highest degree. He was both the first and the greatest master of this art. By a few strokes he knew how to mark the general image and character of whatever object he attempted; and produced, by this alone, a truer representation than his master Giovanni Bellino, or any of his predecessors, who finished every hair. His great care was to express the general color, to preserve the masses of light and shade, and to give by opposition the idea of that solidity which is inseparable from natural objects. When those are preserved, though the work should possess no other merit, it will have in a proper place its complete effect; but where any of these are wanting, however minutely labored the picture may be in the detail, the whole will have a false and even an unfinished appearance, at whatever distance, or in whatever light, it can be shown.

It is in vain to attend to the variation of tints, if, in that attention, the general hue of flesh is lost; or to finish ever so minutely the parts, if the masses are not observed, or the whole not well put together.

Vasari seems to have had no great disposition to favor the Venetian Painters, yet he every where justly commends *il modo di fare, la maniera, la bella pratica*; that is, the admirable manner and practice of that school. On Titian,

in particular, he bestows the epithets of *giudizioso, bello, e stupendo*.

This manner was then new to the world, but that unshaken truth on which it is founded, has fixed it as a model to all succeeding Painters; and those who will examine into the artifice, will find it to consist in the power of generalising, and in the shortness and simplicity of the means employed.

Many artists, as Vasari likewise observes, have ignorantly imagined they are imitating the manner of Titian when they leave their colors rough, and neglect the detail; but, not possessing the principles on which he wrought, they have produced what he calls *goffe pitture*, absurd foolish pictures; for such will always be the consequence of affecting dexterity without science, without selection, and without fixed principles.

Raffaelle and Titian seem to have looked at nature for different purposes; they both had the power of extending their view to the whole; but one looked only for the general effect as produced by form, the other as produced by color.

We can not entirely refuse to Titian the merit of attending to the general *form* of his object, as well as color; but his deficiency lay, a deficiency at least when he is compared with Raffaelle, in not possessing the power like him of correcting the form of his model by any general idea of beauty in his own mind. Of this his St. Sebastian is a particular instance. This figure appears to be a most exact representation both of the form and the color of the model, which he then happened to have before him; it has all the force of nature, and the coloring is flesh itself; but, unluckily, the model was of a bad form, es-

pecially the legs. Titian has with as much care preserved these defects, as he has imitated the beauty and brilliancy of the coloring. In his coloring he was large and general, as in his design he was minute and partial: in the one he was a genius, in the other not much above a copier. I do not, however, speak now of all his pictures: instances enough may be produced in his works, where those observations on his defects could not with any propriety be applied; but it is in the manner or language, as it may be called, in which Titian and others of that school express themselves, that their chief excellence lies. This manner is in reality, in painting, what language is in poetry; we are all sensible how differently the imagination is affected by the same sentiment expressed in different words, and how mean or how grand the same object appears when presented to us by different Painters. Whether it is the human figure, an animal, or even inanimate objects, there is nothing, however unpromising in appearance, but may be raised into dignity, convey sentiment and produce emotion, in the hand of a Painter of genius. What was said of Virgil, that he threw even the dung about the ground with an air of dignity, may be applied to Titian: whatever he touched, however naturally mean, and habitually familiar, by a kind of magic he invested with grandeur and importance.

I must here observe, that I am not recommending a neglect of the detail; indeed it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prescribe *certain* bounds, and tell how far, or when, it is to be observed or neglected; much must, at last, be left to the taste and judgment of the artist. I am well aware that a judicious detail will sometimes give the force of truth to the work, and consequently interest the

spectator. I only wish to impress on your minds the true distinction between essential and subordinate powers; and to show what qualities in the art claim your *chief* attention, and what may, with the least injury to your reputation, be neglected. Something, perhaps, always must be neglected; the lesser ought then to give way to the greater; and since every work can have but a limited time allotted to it, (for even supposing a whole life to be employed about one picture, it is still limited,) it appears more reasonable to employ that time to the best advantage, in contriving various methods of composing the work,—in trying different effect of light and shadow,—and employing the labor of correction in heightening by a judicious adjustment of the parts the effects of the whole,—than that the time should be taken up in minutely finishing those parts.

But there is another kind of high finishing, which may safely be condemned, as it seems to counteract its own purpose; that is, when the artist, to avoid that hardness which proceeds from the outline cutting against the ground, softens and blends the colors to excess; this is what the ignorant call high finishing, but which tends to destroy the brilliancy of color, and the true effect of representation; which consists very much in preserving the same proportion of sharpness and bluntness that is found in natural objects. This extreme softening, instead of producing the effect of softness, gives the appearance of ivory, or some other hard substance, highly polished.

The portraits of Cornelius Jansen appear to have this defect, and consequently want that suppleness which is the characteristic of flesh; whereas, in the works of Vandyck we find the true mixture of softness and hard-

ness perfectly observed. The same defect may be found in the manner of Vanderwerf, in opposition to that of Teniers; and such also, we may add, is the manner of Raffaele in his oil pictures, in comparison with that of Titian.

The name which Raffaele has so justly maintained as the first of Painters, we may venture to say was not acquired by this laborious attention. His apology may be made by saying that it was the manner of his country; but if he had expressed his ideas with the facility and eloquence, as it may be called, of Titian, his works would certainly not have been less excellent; and that praise, which ages and nations have poured out upon him, for possessing Genius in the higher attainments of art, would have been extended to them all.

Those who are not conversant in works of art, are often surprised at the high value set by connoisseurs on drawings which appear careless, and in every respect unfinished; but they are truly valuable; and their value arises from this, that they give the idea of an whole; and this whole is often expressed by a dexterous facility which indicates the true power of a Painter, even though roughly exerted; whether it consists in the general composition, or the general form of each figure, or the turn of the attitude which bestows grace and elegance. All this we may see fully exemplified in the very skilful drawings of Parmegiano and Correggio. On whatever account we value these drawings, it is certainly not for high finishing, or a minute attention to particulars.

Excellence in every part, and in every province of our art, from the highest style of history down to the resemblances of still life, will depend on this power of extending

the attention at once to the whole, without which the greatest diligence is vain.

I wish you to bear in mind, that when I speak of an whole, I do not mean simply an *whole* as belonging to composition, but an *whole* with respect to the general style of coloring; an *whole* with regard to the light and shade; an *whole* of every thing which may separately become the main object of a Painter.

I remember a Landscape-painter in Rome, who was known by the name of STUDIO, from his patience in high finishing, in which he thought the whole excellence of art consisted; so that he once endeavored, as he said, to represent every individual leaf on a tree. This picture I never saw; but I am very sure that an artist, who looked only at the general character of the species, the order of the branches, and the masses of the foliage, would in a few minutes produce a more true resemblance of trees than this Painter in as many months.

A Landscape-painter certainly ought to study anatomically (if I may use the expression) all the objects which he paints; but when he is to turn his studies to use, his skill, as a man of genius, will be displayed in showing the general effect, preserving the same degree of hardness and softness which the objects have in nature; for he applies himself to the imagination, not to the curiosity, and works not for the Virtuoso or the Naturalist, but for the common observer of life and nature. When he knows his subject, he will know not only what to describe, but what to omit: and this skill in leaving out is, in all things, a great part of knowledge and wisdom.

The same excellence of manner which Titian displayed in History or Portrait-painting, is equally conspicuous in

his Landscapes, whether they are professedly such, or serve only as backgrounds. One of the most eminent of this latter kind is to be found in the picture of St. Pietro Martire. The large trees, which are here introduced, are plainly distinguished from each other by the different manner with which the branches shoot from their trunks, as well as by their different foliage; and the weeds in the foreground are varied in the same manner, just as much as variety requires, and no more. When Algarotii, speaking of this picture, praises it for the minute discriminations of the leaves and plants, even, as he says, to excite the admiration of a Botanist, his intention was undoubtedly to give praise even at the expense of truth; for he must have known that this is not the character of the picture; but connoisseurs will always find in pictures what they think they ought to find: he was not aware that he was giving a description injurious to the reputation of Titian.

Such accounts may be very hurtful to young artists, who never have had an opportunity of seeing the work described; and they may possibly conclude that this great Artist acquired the name of the Divine Titian from his eminent attention to such trifling circumstances, which in reality would not raise him above the level of the most ordinary Painter.

We may extend these observations even to what seems to have but a single, and that an individual object. The excellence of Portrait-painting, and, we may add, even the likeness, the character, and countenance, as I have observed in another place, depend more upon the general effect produced by the Painter, than on the exact expression of the peculiarities, or minute discrimination of the parts. The chief attention of the artist is therefore em-

ployed in planting the features in their proper places, which so much contributes to giving the effect and true impression of the whole. The very peculiarities may be reduced to classes and general descriptions; and there are therefore large ideas to be found even in this contracted subject. He may afterwards labor single features to what degree he thinks proper, but let him not forget continually to examine, whether in finishing the parts he is not destroying the general effect.

It is certainly a thing to be wished, that all excellence were applied to illustrate subjects that are interesting and worthy of being commemorated; whereas, of half the pictures that are in the world, the subject can be valued only as an occasion which set the artist to work; and yet, our high estimation of such pictures, without considering, or perhaps without knowing the subject, shows how much our attention is engaged by the art alone.

Perhaps nothing that we can say will so clearly show the advantage and excellence of this faculty, as that it confers the character of Genius on works that pretend to no other merit; in which is neither expression, character, or dignity, and where none are interested in the subject. We can not refuse the character of Genius to the Marriage of Paulo Veronese, without opposing the general sense of mankind, (great authorities have called it the triumph of Painting,) or to the Altar of St. Augustine at Antwerp, by Rubens, which equally deserves that title, and for the same reason. Neither of those pictures have any interesting story to support them. That of Paulo Veronese is only a representation of a great concourse of people at a dinner; and the subject of Rubens, if it may be called a subject where nothing is doing, is an assembly of various Saints that lived

in different ages. The whole excellence of those pictures consists in mechanical dexterity, working, however, under the influence of that comprehensive faculty which I have so often mentioned.

It is by this, and this alone, that the mechanical power is ennobled, and raised much above its natural rank. And it appears to me, that with propriety it acquires this character, as an instance of that superiority with which mind predominates over matter, by contracting into one whole what nature has made multifarious.

The great advantage of this idea of a whole is, that a greater quantity of truth may be said to be contained and expressed in a few lines or touches, than in the most laborious finishing of the parts where this is not regarded. It is upon this foundation that it stands; and the justness of the observation would be confirmed by the ignorant in art, if it were possible to take their opinions unseduced by some false notion of what they imagine they ought to see in a Picture. As it is an art, they think they ought to be pleased in proportion as they see that art ostentatiously displayed; they will, from this supposition, prefer neatness, high-finishing, and gaudy coloring, to the truth, simplicity, and unity of nature. Perhaps, too, the totally ignorant beholder, like the ignorant artist, can not comprehend an whole nor even what it means. But if false notions do not anticipate their perceptions, they who are capable of observation, and who, pretending to no skill, look only straight forward, will praise and condemn in proportion as the Painter has succeeded in the effect of the whole. Here, general satisfaction, or general dislike, though perhaps despised by the Painter, as proceeding from the ignorance of the principles of art, may yet help to regulate his conduct, and bring back

his attention to that which ought to be his principal object, and from which he has deviated for the sake of minuter beauties.

An instance of this right judgment I once saw in a child, in going through a gallery where there were many portraits of the last ages, which, though neatly put out of hand, were very ill put together. The child paid no attention to the neat finishing or naturalness of any bit of drapery, but appeared to observe only the ungracefulness of the persons represented, and put herself in the posture of every figure which she saw in a forced and awkward attitude. The censure of nature, uninformed, fastened upon the greatest fault that could be in a picture, because it related to the character and management of the whole.

I should be sorry, if what has been said should be understood to have any tendency to encourage that carelessness which leaves work in an unfinished state. I commend nothing for the want of exactness; I mean to point out that kind of exactness which is the best, and which is alone truly to be so esteemed.

So far is my disquisition from giving countenance to idleness, that there is nothing in our art which enforces such continual exertion and circumspection, as an attention to the general effect of the whole. It requires much study and much practice; it requires the Painter's entire mind; whereas the parts may be finishing by nice touches, while his mind is engaged on other matters; he may even hear a play or a novel read without much disturbance. The artist who flatters his own indolence, will continually find himself evading this active exertion, and applying his thoughts to the ease and laziness of highly finishing the

parts; producing at last what Cowley calls "laborious effects of idleness."

No work can be too much finished, provided the diligence employed be directed to its proper object; but I have observed that an excessive labor in the detail has, nine times in ten, been pernicious to the general effect, even when it has been the labor of great masters. It indicates a bad choice, which is an ill setting out in any undertaking.

To give a right direction to your industry has been my principal purpose in this discourse. It is this, which I am confident often makes the difference between two Students of equal capacities, and of equal industry. While the one is employing his labor on minute objects of little consequence, the other is acquiring the art, and perfecting the habit, of seeing nature in an extensive view, in its proper proportions, and its due subordination of parts.

Before I conclude, I must make one observation sufficiently connected with the present subject.

The same extension of mind which gives the excellence of Genius to the theory and mechanical practice of the art, will direct him likewise in the method of study, and give him the superiority over those who narrowly follow a more confined track of partial imitation. Whoever, in order to finish his education, should travel to Italy, and spend his whole time there only in copying pictures, and measuring statues or buildings, (though these things are not to be neglected,) would return with little improvement. He that imitates the Iliad, says Dr. Young, is not imitating Homer. It is not by laying up in the memory the particular details of any of the great works of art, that any man becomes a great artist, if he stops without making himself master of

the general principles on which these works are conducted. If he even hopes to rival those whom he admires, he must consider their works as the means of teaching him the true art of seeing nature. When this is acquired, he then may be said to have appropriated their powers, or at least the foundation of their powers, to himself; the rest must depend upon his own industry and application. The great business of study is, to form a *mind*, adapted and adequate to all times and all occasions; to which all nature is then laid open, and which may be said to possess the key of her inexhaustible riches.

DISCOURSE XII.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1784.

Particular methods of study of little consequence.—Little of the Art can be taught.—Love of method often a love of idleness.—Pittori improvvisatori apt to be careless and incorrect; seldom original and striking.—This proceeds from their not studying the works of other masters.

GENTLEMEN,

IN consequence of the situation in which I have the honor to be placed in this Academy, it has often happened, that I have been consulted by the young Students who intend to spend some years in Italy, concerning the method of regulating their studies. I am, as I ought to be, solicitously desirous to communicate the entire result of my experience and observation; and though my openness and facility in giving my opinions might make some amends for whatever was defective in them, yet I fear my answers have not often given satisfaction. Indeed I have never been sure, that I understood perfectly what they meant, and was not without some suspicion that they had not themselves very distinct ideas of the object of their inquiry.

If the information required was, by what means the path that leads to excellence could be discovered; if they wished to know whom they were to take for their guides; what to adhere to, and what to avoid; where they were to bait, and where they were to take up their rest; what was to be tasted only, and what should be their diet; such general directions are certainly proper for a Student to ask,

and for me, to the best of my capacity, to give; but these rules have been already given; they have, in reality, been the subject of almost all my Discourses from this place. But I am rather inclined to think that by *method of study*, it was meant, (as several do mean,) that the times and the seasons should be prescribed, and the order settled, in which every thing was to be done: that it might be useful to point out to what degree of excellence one part of the Art was to be carried, before the Student proceeded to the next; how long he was to continue to draw from the ancient statues, when to begin to compose, and when to apply to the study of coloring.

Such a detail of instruction might be extended with a great deal of plausible and ostentatious amplification. But it would at best be useless. Our studies will be for ever, in a very great degree, under the direction of chance; like travelers, we must take what we can get, and when we can get it; whether it is or is not administered to us in the most commodious manner, in the most proper place, or at the exact minute when we would wish to have it.

Treatises on education, and method of study, have always appeared to me to have one general fault. They proceed upon a false supposition of life; as if we possessed not only a power over events and circumstances, but had a greater power over ourselves than I believe any of us will be found to possess. Instead of supposing ourselves to be perfect patterns of wisdom and virtue, it seems to me more reasonable to treat ourselves (as I am sure we must now and then treat others) like humorsome children, whose fancies are often to be indulged, in order to keep them in good humor with themselves and their pursuits. It is necessary to use some artifice of this kind in all processes which by their

very nature are long, tedious, and complex, in order to prevent our taking that aversion to our studies, which the continual shackles of methodical restraint are sure to produce.

I would rather wish a student, as soon as he goes abroad, to employ himself upon whatever he has been incited to by any immediate impulse, than to go sluggishly about a prescribed task; whatever he does in such a state of mind, little advantage accrues from it, as nothing sinks deep enough to leave any lasting impression; and it is impossible that any thing should be well understood, or well done, that is taken into a reluctant understanding, and executed with a servile hand.

It is desirable, and indeed is necessary to intellectual health, that the mind should be recreated and refreshed with a variety in our studies; that in the irksomeness of uniform pursuit we should be relieved, and, if I may so say, deceived, as much as possible. Besides, the minds of men are so very differently constituted, that it is impossible to find one method which shall be suitable to all. It is of no use to prescribe to those who have no talents; and those who have talents will find methods for themselves—methods dictated to them by their own particular dispositions, and by the experience of their own particular necessities.

However, I would not be understood to extend this doctrine to the younger students. The first part of the life of a student, like that of other school-boys, must necessarily be a life of restraint. The grammar, the rudiments, however unpalatable, must at all events be mastered. After a habit is acquired of drawing correctly from the model (whatever it may be) which he has before him, the rest, I think, may be safely left to chance; always supposing that the stu-

dent is *employed*, and that his studies are directed to the proper object.

A passion for his art, and an eager desire to excel, will more than supply the place of method. By leaving a student to himself, he may possibly indeed be led to undertake matters above his strength; but the trial will at least have this advantage, it will discover to himself his own deficiencies; and this discovery alone, is a very considerable acquisition. One inconvenience, I acknowledge, may attend bold and arduous attempts; frequent failure may discourage. This evil, however, is not more pernicious than the slow proficiency which is the natural consequence of too easy tasks.

Whatever advantages method may have in dispatch of business, (and there it certainly has many,) I have but little confidence of its efficacy in acquiring excellence in any art whatever. Indeed, I have always strongly suspected, that this love of method, on which some persons appear to place so great dependence, is, in reality, at the bottom, a love of idleness, a want of sufficient energy to put themselves into immediate action: it is a sort of an apology to themselves for doing nothing. I have known artists who may truly be said to have spent their whole lives, or at least the most precious part of their lives, in planning methods of study, without ever beginning; resolving, however, to put it all in practice at some time or other,—when a certain period arrives,—when proper conveniences are procured,—or when they remove to a certain place better calculated for study. It is not uncommon for such persons to go abroad with the most honest and sincere resolution of studying hard, when they shall arrive at the end of their journey. The same want of exertion, arising from the same cause

which made them at home put off the day of labor until they had found a proper scheme for it, still continues in Italy, and they consequently return home with little, if any, improvement.

In the practice of art, as well as in morals, it is necessary to keep a watchful and jealous eye over ourselves; idleness, assuming the specious disguise of industry, will lull to sleep all suspicion of our want of an active exertion of strength. A provision of endless apparatus, a bustle of infinite inquiry and research, or even the mere mechanical labor of copying, may be employed, to evade and shuffle off real labor,—the real labor of thinking.

I have declined, for these reasons, to point out any particular method and course of study to young Artists on their arrival in Italy. I have left it to their own prudence, a prudence which will grow and improve upon them in the course of unremitted, ardent industry, directed by a real love of their profession, and an unfeigned admiration of those who have been universally admitted as patterns of excellence in the art.

In the exercise of that general prudence, I shall here submit to their consideration such miscellaneous observations as have occurred to me on considering the mistaken notions or evil habits, which have prevented that progress toward excellence, which the natural abilities of several Artists might otherwise have enabled them to make.

False opinions and vicious habits have done far more mischief to students, and to Professors too, than any wrong methods of study.

Under the influence of sloth, or of some mistaken notion, is that disposition which always wants to lean on other men. Such students are always talking of the prodigious

progress they should make, if they could but have the advantage of being taught by some particular eminent Master. To him they would wish to transfer that care, which they ought and must take of themselves. Such are to be told, that after the rudiments are past, very little of our Art can be taught by others. The most skilful Master can do little more than put the end of the clue into the hands of his Scholar, by which he must conduct himself.

It is true, the beauties and defects of the works of our predecessors may be pointed out; the principles on which their works are conducted may be explained; the great examples of Ancient Art may be spread out before them; but the most sumptuous entertainment is prepared in vain, if the guests will not take the trouble of helping themselves.

Even the Academy itself, where every convenience for study is procured, and laid before them, may, from that very circumstance, from leaving no difficulties to be encountered in the pursuit, cause a remission of their industry. It is not uncommon to see young artists, whilst they are struggling with every obstacle in their way, exert themselves with such success as to outstrip competitors possessed of every means of improvement. The promising expectation which was formed, on so much being done with so little means, has recommended them to a Patron, who has supplied them with every convenience of study; from that time their industry and eagerness of pursuit has forsaken them; they stand still, and see others rush on before them.

Such men are like certain animals, who will feed only when there is but little provender, and that got at with difficulty through the bars of a rack, but refuse to touch it when there is an abundance before them.

Perhaps, such a falling off may proceed from the fac-

ulties being overpowered by the immensity of the materials ; as the traveller desires ever to arrive at the end of his journey, when the whole extent of the road which he is to pass is at once displayed to his view.

Among the first moral qualities, therefore, which a Student ought to cultivate, is a just and manly confidence in himself, or rather in the effects of that persevering industry which he is resolved to possess.

When Raffaello, by means of his connection with Bramante, the Pope's Architect, was fixed upon to adorn the Vatican with his works, he had done nothing that marked in him any great superiority over his contemporaries ; though he was then but young, he had under his direction the most considerable Artists of his age ; and we know what kind of men those were ; a lesser mind would have sunk under such a weight ; and if we should judge from the meek and gentle disposition which we are told was the character of Raffaello, we might expect this would have happened to him ; but his strength appeared to increase in proportion as exertion was required ; and it is not improbable that we are indebted to the good fortune which first placed him in that conspicuous situation, for those great examples of excellence which he has left us.

The observations to which I formerly wished, and now desire, to point your attention, relate not to errors which are committed by those who have no claim to merit, but to those inadvertencies into which men of parts only can fall by the over-rating or the abuse of some real, though perhaps subordinate, excellence. The errors last alluded to are those of backward, timid characters ; what I shall now speak of, belong to another class ; to those Artists who are distinguished for the readiness and facility of their invention. It

is undoubtedly a splendid and desirable accomplishment to be able to design instantaneously any given subject. It is an excellence that I believe every Artist would wish to possess ; but unluckily, the manner in which this dexterity is acquired, habituates the mind to be contented with first thoughts without choice or selection. The judgment, after it has been long passive, by degrees loses its power of becoming active when exertion is necessary.

Whoever, therefore, has this talent, must in some measure undo what he has had the habit of doing, or at least give a new turn to his mind : great works, which are to live and stand the criticism of posterity, are not performed at a heat. A proportionable time is required for deliberation and circumspection. I remember when I was at Rome looking at the fighting Gladiator, in company with an eminent Sculptor, and I expressed my admiration of the skill with which the whole is composed, and the minute attention of the Artist to the change of every muscle in that momentary exertion of strength : he was of opinion that a work so perfect required nearly the whole life of man to perform.

I believe, if we look around us, we shall find, that in the sister art of Poetry, what has been soon done, has been as soon forgotten. The judgment and practice of a great Poet on this occasion is worthy attention. Metastasio, who has so much and justly distinguished himself throughout Europe, at his outset was an *Improvvisatore*, or extempore Poet, a description of men not uncommon in Italy : it is not long since he was asked by a friend, if he did not think the custom of inventing and reciting *extempore*, which he practiced when a boy in his character of an *Improvvisatore*, might not be considered as a happy beginning of his education ; he thought it, on the contrary, a disadvantage to him :

he said that he had acquired by that habit a carelessness and incorrectness, which it cost him much trouble to overcome, and to substitute in the place of it a totally different habit, that of thinking with selection, and of expressing himself with correctness and precision.

However extraordinary it may appear, it is certainly true, that the inventions of the *Pittori improvvisatori*, as they may be called, have,—notwithstanding the common boast of their authors that all is spun from their own brain,—very rarely any thing that has in the least the air of originality;—their compositions are generally commonplace, uninteresting, without character or expression; like those flowery speeches that we sometimes hear, which impress no new ideas on the mind.

I would not be thought, however, by what has been said, to oppose the use, the advantage, the necessity there is, of a Painter's being readily able to express his ideas by sketching. The evil to be apprehended is, his resting there, and not correcting them afterwards from nature, or taking the trouble to look about him for whatever assistance the works of others will afford him.

We are not to suppose, that when a Painter sits down to deliberate on any work, he has all his knowledge to seek; he must not only be able to draw *extempore* the human figure in every variety of action, but he must be acquainted likewise with the general principles of composition, and possess a habit of foreseeing, while he is composing, the effect of the masses of light and shadow, that will attend such a disposition. His mind is entirely occupied by his attention to the whole. It is a subsequent consideration to determine the attitude and expression of individual figures. It is in this period of his work that I would recommend to every

artist to look over his portfolio, or pocket-book, in which he has treasured up all the happy inventions, all the extraordinary and expressive attitudes, that he has met with in the course of his studies; not only for the sake of borrowing from those studies whatever may be applicable to his own work, but likewise on account of the great advantage he will receive by bringing the ideas of great Artists more distinctly before his mind, which will teach him to invent other figures in a similar style.

Sir Francis Bacon speaks with approbation of the visionary methods Demosthenes and Cicero employed to assist their invention; and illustrates their use by a quaint comparison after his manner. These particular *Studios* being not immediately connected with our art, I need not cite the passage I allude to, and shall only observe that such preparation totally opposes the generally received opinions that are floating in the world, concerning genius and inspiration. The same great man, in another place, speaking of his own essays, remarks, that they treat of "those things, wherein both men's lives and persons are most conversant, whereof a man shall find much in experience, but little in books:" they are then what an artist would naturally call invention, and yet we may suspect that even the genius of Bacon, great as it was, would never have been enabled to have made those observations, if his mind had not been trained and disciplined by reading the observations of others. Nor could he without such reading have known that those opinions were not to be found in other books.

I know there are many Artists of great fame who appear never to have looked out of themselves, and who probably would think it derogatory to their character, to be supposed to borrow from any other Painter. But when we

recollect, and compare the works of such men with those who took to their assistance the inventions of others, we shall be convinced of the great advantage of this latter practice.

The two men most eminent for readiness of invention, that occur to me, are Luca Giordano and La Fage; one in painting and the other in drawing.

To such extraordinary powers as were possessed by both of those Artists, we can not refuse the character of Genius; at the same time, it must be acknowledged, that it was that kind of mechanic Genius which operates without much assistance of the head. In all their works, which are (as might be expected) very numerous, we may look in vain for any thing that can be said to be original and striking; and yet, according to the ordinary ideas of originality, they have as good pretensions as most Painters; for they borrowed very little from others, and still less will any Artist, that can distinguish between excellence and insipidity, ever borrow from them.

To those men, and all such, let us oppose the practice of the first of Painters. I suppose we shall all agree, that no man ever possessed a greater power of invention, and stood less in need of foreign assistance, than Raffaello; and yet, when he was designing one of his greatest as well as latest works, the Cartoons, it is very apparent that he had the studies which he had made from Masaccio before him. Two noble figures of St. Paul, which he found there, he adopted in his own work: one of them he took for St. Paul preaching at Athens: and the other for the same Saint, when chastising the sorcerer Elymas. Another figure in the same work, whose head is sunk in his breast, with his eyes shut, appearing deeply wrapt up in thought, was intro-

duced amongst the listeners to the preaching of St. Paul. The most material alteration that is made in those two figures of St. Paul, is the addition of the left hands, which are not seen in the original. It is a rule that Raffaelle observed, (and indeed ought never to be dispensed with,) in a principal figure, to show both hands; that it should never be a question, what is become of the other hand. For the sacrifice at Lystra, he took the whole ceremony much as it stands in an ancient Basso-relievo, since published in the ADMIRANDA.

I have given examples from those pictures only of Raffaelle which we have among us, though many other instances might be produced of this great painter's not disdaining assistance; indeed his known wealth was so great, that he might borrow where he pleased without loss of credit.

It may be remarked that this work of Masaccio, from which he has borrowed so freely, was a public work, and at no farther distance from Rome than Florence; so that if he had considered it a disgraceful theft, he was sure to be detected; but he was well satisfied that his character for Invention would be little affected by such a discovery; nor is it, except in the opinion of those who are ignorant of the manner in which great works are built.

Those who steal from mere poverty; who, having nothing of their own, can not exist a minute without making such depredations; who are so poor that they have no place in which they can even deposit what they have taken; to men of this description nothing can be said: but such artists as those to whom I suppose myself now speaking, men whom I consider as competently provided with all the necessaries and conveniences of art, and who

do not desire to steal baubles and common trash, but wish only to possess peculiar rarities which they select to ornament their cabinets, and take care to enrich the general store with materials of equal or of greater value than what they have taken; such men surely need not be ashamed of that friendly intercourse which ought to exist among artists, of receiving from the dead and giving to the living, and perhaps to those who are yet unborn.

The daily food and nourishment of the mind of an artist is found in the great works of his predecessors. There is no other way for him to become great himself. *Serpens, nisi serpentem comederit, non fit draco*,* is a remark of a whimsical natural history, which I have read, though I do not recollect its title: however false as to dragons, it is applicable enough to artists.

Raffaële, as appears from what has been said, had carefully studied the works of Masaccio; and, indeed, there was no other, if we except Michael Angelo, (whom he likewise imitated,) so worthy of his attention; and though his manner was dry and hard, his compositions formal, and not enough diversified according to the custom of Painters in that early period, yet his works possess that grandeur and simplicity which accompany, and even sometimes proceed from, regularity and hardness of manner. We must consider the barbarous state of the Arts before his time, when skill in drawing was so little understood that the best of the painters could not even foreshorten the foot, but every figure appeared to stand upon its toes; and what served for drapery, had, from the hardness

* In Ben Jonson's *Catiline* we find this aphorism, with a slight variation:—

“A serpent, ere he comes to be a dragon,
Must eat a bat.”—M.

and smallness of the folds, too much the appearance of cords clinging round the body. He first introduced large drapery, flowing in an easy and natural manner: indeed he appears to be the first who discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the Art afterwards arrived, and may, therefore, be justly considered as one of the great Fathers of the modern Art.

Though I have been led on to a longer digression respecting this great Painter than I intended, yet I can not avoid mentioning another excellence which he possessed in a very eminent degree: he was as much distinguished among his contemporaries for his diligence and industry, as he was for the natural faculties of his mind. We are told that his whole attention was absorbed in the pursuit of his art, and that he acquired the name of Masaccio,* from his total disregard to his dress, his person, and all the common concerns of life. He is, indeed, a signal instance of what well-directed diligence will do in a short time; he lived but twenty-seven years; yet in that short space carried the art so far beyond what it had before reached, that he appears to stand alone as a model for his successors. Vasari gives a long catalogue of Painters and Sculptors, who formed their taste, and learned their art, by studying his works; among those, he names Michael Angelo, Leonardi da Vinci, Pietro Perugino, Raffaele, Bartolomeo, Andrea del Sarto, Il Rosso, and Pierino del Vaga.

The habit of contemplating and brooding over the ideas of great geniuses, till you find yourself warmed by the contact, is the true method of forming an artist-like

* The addition of *accio* denotes some deformity or imperfection attending that person to whom it is applied.—R.

mind; it is impossible, in the presence of those great men, to think, or invent in a mean manner; a state of mind is acquired that receives those ideas only which relish of grandeur and simplicity.

Besides the general advantage of forming the taste by such an intercourse, there is another of a particular kind, which was suggested to me by the practice of Raffaelle, when imitating the work of which I have been speaking. The figure of the Proconsul, Sergius Paulus, is taken from the Felix of Masaccio, though one is a front figure, and the other seen in profile; the action is likewise somewhat changed; but it is plain Raffaelle had that figure in his mind. There is a circumstance indeed, which I mention by the by, which marks it very particularly; Sergius Paulus wears a crown of laurel; this is hardly reconcileable to strict propriety, and the *costume*, of which Raffaelle was in general a good observer; but he found it so in Masaccio, and he did not bestow so much pains in disguise as to change it. It appears to me to be an excellent practice, thus to suppose the figures which you wish to adopt in the works of those great Painters to be statues; and to give, as Raffaelle has here given, another view, taking care to preserve all the spirit and grace you find in the original.

I should hope, from what has been lately said, that it is not necessary to guard myself against any supposition of recommending an entire dependence upon former masters. I do not desire that you should get other people to do your business, or to think for you; I only wish you to consult with, to call in as counsellors, men the most distinguished for their knowledge and experience, the result of which counsel must ultimately depend upon yourself. Such conduct in the commerce of life has never been considered as

disgraceful, or in any respect to imply intellectual imbecility; it is a sign rather of that true wisdom, which feels individual imperfection; and is conscious to itself how much collective observation is necessary to fill the immense extent, and to comprehend the infinite variety of nature. I recommend neither self-dependence nor plagiarism. I advise you only to take that assistance which every human being wants, and which, as appears from the examples that have been given, the greatest painters have not disdained to accept. Let me add, that the diligence required in the search, and the exertion subsequent in accommodating those ideas to your own purpose, is a business which idleness will not, and ignorance can not, perform. But in order more distinctly to explain what kind of borrowing I mean, when I recommend so anxiously the study of the works of great masters, let us, for a minute, return again to Raffaele, consider his method of practice, and endeavor to imitate him, in his manner of imitating others.

The two figures of St. Paul which I lately mentioned, are so nobly conceived by Masaccio, that perhaps it was not in the power even of Raffaele himself to raise and improve them, nor has he attempted it; but he has had the address to change in some measure without diminishing the grandeur of their character; he has substituted, in the place of a serene composed dignity, that animated expression which was necessary to the more active employment he assigned them.

— In the same manner he has given more animation to the figure of Sergius Paulus, and to that which is introduced in the picture of St. Paul preaching, of which little more than hints are given by Masaccio, which Raffaele has finished. The closing the eyes of this figure, which in Ma-

saccio might be easily mistaken for sleeping, is not in the least ambiguous in the Cartoon: his eyes indeed are closed, but they are closed with such vehemence, that the agitation of a mind *perplexed in the extreme* is seen at the first glance; but what is most extraordinary, and I think particularly to be admired, is, that the same idea is continued through the whole figure, even to the drapery, which is so closely muffled about him, that even his hands are not seen; by this happy correspondence between the expression of the countenance, and the disposition of the parts, the figure appears to think from head to foot. Men of superior talents alone are capable of thus using and adapting other men's minds to their own purposes, or are able to make out and finish what was only in the original a hint or imperfect conception. A readiness in taking such hints, — which escape the dull and ignorant, makes in my opinion no inconsiderable part of that faculty of the mind which is called Genius.

It often happens that hints may be taken and employed in a situation totally different from that in which they were originally employed. There is a figure of a Bacchante leaning backward, her head thrown quite behind her, which seems to be a favorite invention, as it is so frequently repeated in basso-relievos, cameos, and intaglios; it is intended to express an enthusiastic frantic kind of joy. This figure Baccio Bandinelli, in a drawing that I have of that Master of the Descent from the Cross, has adopted (and he knew very well what was worth borrowing) for one of the Marys, to express frantic agony of grief. It is curious to observe, and it is certainly true, that the extremes of contrary passions are with very little variation expressed by the same action.

If I were to recommend method in any part of the study of a Painter, it would be in regard to invention; that young Students should not presume to think themselves qualified to invent, till they were acquainted with those stores of invention the world already possesses, and had by that means accumulated sufficient materials for the mind to work with. It would certainly be no improper method of forming the mind of a young artist, to begin with such exercises as the Italians call a *Pasticcio* composition of the different excellencies which are dispersed in all other works of the same kind. It is not supposed that he is to stop here, but that he is to acquire by this means the art of selecting, first what is truly excellent in Art, and then what is still more excellent in Nature; a task which, without this previous study, he will be but ill qualified to perform.

The doctrine which is here advanced, is acknowledged to be new, and to many may appear strange. But I only demand for it the reception of a stranger; a favorable and attentive consideration, without that entire confidence which might be claimed under authoritative recommendation.

After you have taken a figure, or any idea of a figure, from any of those great Painters, there is another operation still remaining, which I hold to be indispensably necessary, that is, never to neglect finishing from nature every part of the work. What is taken from a model, though the first idea may have been suggested by another, you have a just right to consider as your own property. And here I can not avoid mentioning a circumstance in placing the model, though to some it may appear trifling. It is better to possess the model with the attitude you require, than to place him with your own hands: by this means it happens often that the model puts himself in an action superior to your

own imagination. It is a great matter to be in the way of accident, and to be watchful and ready to take advantage of it: besides, when you fix the position of a model, there is danger of putting him in an attitude into which no man would naturally fall. This extends even to drapery. We must be cautious in touching and altering a fold of the stuff, which serves as a model, for fear of giving it inadvertently a forced form; and it is perhaps better to take the chance of another casual throw, than to alter the position in which it was at first accidentally cast.

Rembrandt, in order to take the advantage of accident, appears often to have used the pallet-knife to lay his colors on the canvass, instead of the pencil. Whether it is the knife or any other instrument, it suffices if it is something that does not follow exactly the will. Accident in the hands — of an artist who knows how to take the advantage of its hints, will often produce bold and capricious beauties of handling and facility, such as he would not have thought of, or ventured, with his pencil, under the regular restraint of his hand. However, this is fit only on occasions where no correctness of form is required, such as clouds, stumps of trees, rocks, or broken ground. Works produced in an accidental manner will have the same free unrestrained air as the works of nature, whose particular combinations seem to depend upon accident.

I again repeat, you are never to lose sight of nature; the instant you do, you are all abroad, at the mercy of every gust of fashion, without knowing or seeing the point to which you ought to steer. Whatever trips you make, you must still have nature in your eye. Such deviations as art necessarily requires, I hope in a future Discourse to be able to explain. In the mean time, let me recommend to you,

not to have too great dependence on your practice or memory, however strong those impressions may have been which are there deposited. They are for ever wearing out, and will be at last obliterated, unless they are continually refreshed and repaired.

It is not uncommon to meet with artists who, from a long neglect of cultivating this necessary intimacy with Nature, do not even know her when they see her; she appearing a stranger to them, from their being so long habituated to their own representation of her. I have heard Painters acknowledge, though in that acknowledgment no degradation of themselves was intended, that they could do better without Nature than with her; or, as they expressed it themselves, *that it only put them out*. A painter with such ideas and such habits, is indeed in a most hopeless state. *The art of seeing Nature*, or, in other words, the art of using Models, is in reality the great object, the point to which all our studies are directed. As for the power of being able to do tolerably well, from practice alone, let it be valued according to its worth. But I do not see in what manner it can be sufficient for the production of correct, excellent, and finished Pictures. Works deserving this character never were produced, nor ever will arise, from memory alone; and I will venture to say, that an artist who brings to his work a mind tolerably furnished with the general principles of Art, and a taste formed upon the works of good Artists, in short, who knows in what excellence consists, will, with the assistance of Models, which we will likewise suppose he has learnt the art of using, be an overmatch for the greatest painter that ever lived who should be debarred such advantages.

Our neighbors, the French, are much in this practice of

extempore invention, and their dexterity is such as even to excite admiration, if not envy: but how rarely can this praise be given to their finished pictures!

The late Director of their Academy, *Boucher*, was eminent in this way. When I visited him some years since in France, I found him at work on a very large Picture, without drawings or models of any kind. On my remarking this particular circumstance, he said, when he was young, studying his art, he found it necessary to use models; but he had left them off for many years.

Such Pictures as this was, and such as I fear always will be produced by those who work solely from practice or memory, may be a convincing proof of the necessity of the conduct which I have recommended. However, in justice I can not quit this Painter without adding, that in the former part of his life, when he was in the habit of having recourse to nature, he was not without a considerable degree of merit,—enough to make half the Painters of his country his imitators; he had often grace and beauty, and good skill in composition; but I think all under the influence of a bad taste: his imitators are indeed abominable.

Those Artists who have quitted the service of nature, (whose service, when well understood, is *perfect freedom*,) and have put themselves under the direction of I know not what capricious fantastical mistress, who fascinates and overpowers their whole mind, and from whose dominion there are no hopes of their being ever reclaimed, (since they appear perfectly satisfied, and not at all conscious of their forlorn situation,) like the transformed followers of *Comus*,—

Not once perceive their foul disfigurement;

But boast themselves more comely than before.

Methinks, such men, who have found out so short a

path, have no reason to complain of the shortness of life, and the extent of art ; since life is so much longer than is wanted for their improvement, or indeed is necessary for the accomplishment of their idea of perfection. On the contrary, he who recurs to nature, at every recurrence renews his strength. The rules of art he is never likely to forget ; they are few and simple ; but nature is refined, subtle, and infinitely various, beyond the power and retention of memory ; it is necessary, therefore, to have continual recourse to her. In this intercourse, there is no end of his improvement ; the longer he lives, the nearer he approaches to the true and perfect idea of art.

DISCOURSE XIII.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 11, 1786.

Art not merely Imitation, but under the direction of the Imagination.—In what manner Poetry, Painting, Acting, Gardening, and Architecture, depart from Nature.

GENTLEMEN,

To discover beauties, or to point out faults, in the works of celebrated Masters, and to compare the conduct of one Artist with another, is certainly no mean or inconsiderable part of criticism; but this is still no more than to know the art through the Artist. This test of investigation must have two capital defects; it must be narrow, and it must be uncertain. To enlarge the boundaries of the Art of Painting, as well as to fix its principles, it will be necessary that *that* art, and *those* principles, should be considered in their correspondence with the principles of the other arts, which, like this, address themselves primarily and principally to the imagination. When those connected and kindred principles are brought together to be compared, another comparison will grow out of this; that is, the comparison of them all with those of human nature, from whence arts derive the materials upon which they are to produce their effects.

When this comparison of art with art, and of all arts with the nature of man, is once made with success, our guiding lines are as well ascertained and established as they can be in matters of this description.

This, as it is the highest style of criticism, is at the same time the soundest; for it refers to the eternal and immutable nature of things.

You are not to imagine that I mean to open to you at large, or to recommend to your research, the whole of this vast field of science. It is certainly much above my faculties to reach it: and though it may not be above yours to comprehend it fully, if it were fully and properly brought before you, yet perhaps the most perfect criticism requires habits of speculation and abstraction, not very consistent with the employment which ought to occupy, and the habits of mind which ought to prevail in a practical Artist. I only point out to you these things, that when you do criticise, (as all who work on a plan will criticise more or less,) your criticism may be built on the foundation of true principles; and that though you may not always travel a great way, the way that you do travel may be the right road.

I observe, as a fundamental ground, common to all the Arts with which we have any concern in this discourse, that they address themselves only to two faculties of the mind, its imagination and its sensibility.

All theories which attempt to direct or to control the Art, upon any principles falsely called rational, which we form to ourselves upon a supposition of what ought in reason to be the end or means of Art, independent of the known first effect produced by objects on the imagination, must be false and delusive. For though it may appear bold to say it, the imagination is here the residence of truth. If the imagination be affected, the conclusion is fairly drawn; if it be not affected, the reasoning is erroneous, because the end is not obtained; the effect itself

being the test, and the only test, of the truth and efficacy of the means.

There is in the commerce of life, as in Art, a sagacity which is far from being contradictory to right reason, and is superior to any occasional exercise of that faculty; which supersedes it; and does not wait for the slow progress of deduction, but goes at once, by what appears a kind of intuition; to the conclusion. A man endowed with this faculty, feels and acknowledges the truth, though it is not always in his power, perhaps, to give a reason for it; because he can not recollect and bring before him all the materials that gave birth to his opinion; for very many and very intricate considerations may unite to form the principle, even of small and minute parts, involved in, or dependent on a great system of things: though these in process of time are forgotten, the right impression still remains fixed in his mind.

This impression is the result of the accumulated experience of our whole life, and has been collected, we do not always know how, or when. But this mass of collective observation, however acquired, ought to prevail over that reason, which however powerfully exerted on any particular occasion, will probably comprehend but a partial view of the subject; and our conduct in life, as well as in the Arts, is, or ought to be, generally governed by this habitual reason: it is our happiness that we are enabled to draw on such funds. If we were obliged to enter into a theoretical deliberation on every occasion, before we act, life would be at a stand, and Art would be impracticable.

It appears to me, therefore, that our first thoughts, — that is, the effect which any thing produces on our minds, on its first appearance, is never to be forgotten; and it

demands for that reason, because it is the first, to be laid up with care. If this be not done, the Artist may happen to impose on himself by partial reasoning; by a cold consideration of those animated thoughts which proceed, not perhaps from caprice or rashness, (as he may afterwards conceit,) but from the fullness of his mind, enriched with the copious stores of all the various inventions which he had ever seen, or had ever passed in his mind. These ideas are infused into his design, without any conscious effort; but if he be not on his guard, he may reconsider and correct them, till the whole matter is reduced to a common-place invention.

This is sometimes the effect of what I mean to caution you against; that is to say, an unfounded distrust of the imagination and feeling, in favor of narrow, partial, confined, argumentative theories; and of principles that seem to apply to the design in hand; without considering those general impressions on the fancy in which real principles of *sound reason*, and of much more weight and importance, are involved, and, as it were, lie hid, under the appearance of a sort of vulgar sentiment.

Reason, without doubt, must ultimately determine every thing; at this minute it is required to inform us when that very reason is to give way to feeling.

Though I have often spoken of that mean conception of our art which confines it to mere imitation, I must add, that it may be narrowed to such a mere matter of experiment, as to exclude from it the application of science, which alone gives dignity and compass to any art. But to find proper foundations for science is neither to narrow or to vulgarise it; and this is sufficiently exemplified in the success of experimental philosophy. It is the false system

of reasoning, grounded on a partial view of things, against which I would most earnestly guard you. And I do it the rather, because those narrow theories, so coincident with the poorest and most miserable practices, and which are adopted to give it countenance, have not had their origin in the poorest minds, but in the mistakes, or possibly in the mistaken interpretations, of great and commanding authorities. We are not, therefore, in this case, misled by feeling, but by false speculation.

When such a man as Plato speaks of Painting as only an imitative art, and that our pleasure proceeds from observing and acknowledging the truth of the imitation, I think he misleads us by a partial theory. It is in this poor, partial, and so far, false view of the art, that Cardinal Bembo has chosen to distinguish even Raffaëlle himself, whom our enthusiasm honors with the name of Divine. The same sentiment is adopted by Pope in his epitaph on Sir Godfrey Kneller; and he turns the panegyric solely on imitation, as it is a sort of deception.

I shall not think my time misemployed, if by any means I may contribute to confirm your opinion of what ought to be the object of your pursuit; because, though the best critics must always have exploded this strange idea, yet I know that there is a disposition towards a perpetual recurrence to it, on account of its simplicity and superficial plausibility. For this reason I shall beg leave to lay before you a few thoughts on this subject; to throw out some hints that may lead your minds to an opinion, (which I take to be the truth,) that Painting is not only to be considered as an imitation, operating by deception, but that it is, and ought to be, in many points of view, and strictly speaking, no imitation at all of external nature.

Perhaps it ought to be as far removed from the vulgar idea of imitation, as the refined civilized state in which we live, is removed from a gross state of nature; and those who have not cultivated their imaginations, which the majority of mankind certainly have not, may be said, in regard to arts, to continue in this state of nature. Such men will always prefer imitation to that excellence which is addressed to another faculty that they do not possess; but these are not the persons to whom a Painter is to look, any more than a judge of morals and manners ought to refer controverted points upon those subjects to the opinions of people taken from the banks of the Ohio, or from New Holland.

It is the lowest style only of arts, whether of Painting, Poetry, or Music, that may be said, in the vulgar sense, to be naturally pleasing. The higher efforts of those arts, we know by experience, do not affect minds wholly uncultivated. This refined taste is the consequence of education and habit: we are born only with a capacity of entertaining this refinement, as we are born with a disposition to receive and obey all the rules and regulations of society; and so far it may be said to be natural to us, and no further.

What has been said, may show the Artist how necessary it is, when he looks about him for the advice and criticism of his friends, to make some distinction of the character, taste, experience, and observation in this Art, of those, from whom it is received. An ignorant uneducated man may, like Apelles' critic, be a competent judge of the truth of the representation of a sandal; or, to go somewhat higher, like Moliere's old woman, may decide upon what is nature, in regard to comic humor; but a critic in the higher

style of art ought to possess the same refined taste which directed the Artist in his work.

To illustrate this principle by a comparison with other Arts, I shall now produce some instances to show that they, as well as our own Art, renounce the narrow idea of nature, and the narrow theories derived from that mistaken principle, and apply to that reason only which informs us not what imitation is—a natural representation of a given object—but what it is natural for the imagination to be delighted with. And perhaps there is no better way of acquiring this knowledge, than by this kind of analogy: each art will corroborate and mutually reflect the truth on the other. Such a kind of juxtaposition may likewise have this use, that whilst the Artist is amusing himself in the contemplation of other Arts, he may habitually transfer the principles of those Arts to that which he professes: which ought to be always present to his mind, and to which every thing is to be referred.

So far is Art from being derived from, or having any immediate intercourse with, particular nature as its model, that there are many Arts that set out with a professed deviation from it.

This is certainly not so exactly true in regard to Painting and Sculpture. Our elements are laid in gross common nature—an exact imitation of what is before us: but when we advance to the higher state, we consider this power of imitation, though first in the order of acquisition, as by no means the highest in the scale of perfection.

Poetry addresses itself to the same faculties and the same dispositions as Painting, though by different means. The object of both is to accommodate itself to all the natural propensities and inclinations of the mind. The very

existence of Poetry depends on the license it assumes of deviating from actual nature, in order to gratify natural propensities by other means, which are found by experience full as capable of affording such gratification. It sets out with a language in the highest degree artificial, a construction of measured words, such as never is, nor ever was, used by man. Let this measure be what it may, whether hexameter or any other metre used in Latin or Greek,—or Rhyme, or Blank Verse varied with pauses and accents, in modern languages,—they are all equally removed from nature, and equally a violation of common speech. When this artificial mode has been established as the vehicle of sentiment, there is another principle in the human mind, to which the work must be referred, which still renders it more artificial, carries it still further from common nature, and deviates only to render it more perfect. That principle is the sense of congruity, coherence, and consistency, which is a real existing principle in man; and it must be gratified. Therefore, having once adopted a style and a measure not found in common discourse, it is required that the sentiments also should be in the same proportion elevated above common nature, from the necessity of there being an agreement of the parts among themselves, that one uniform whole may be produced.

To correspond, therefore, with this general system of deviation from nature, the manner in which poetry is offered to the ear, the tone in which it is recited, should be as far removed from the tone of conversation, as the words of which that Poetry is composed. This naturally suggests the idea of modulating the voice by art, which I suppose may be considered as accomplished to the highest degree of excellence in the recitative of the Italian Opera; as we may

conjecture it was in the Chorus that attended the ancient drama. And though the most violent passions, the highest distress, even death itself, are expressed in singing or recitative, I would not admit as sound criticism the condemnation of such exhibitions on account of their being unnatural.

If it is natural for our senses, and our imaginations, to be delighted with singing, with instrumental music, with poetry, and with graceful action, taken separately (none of them being in the vulgar sense natural, even in that separate state;) it is conformable to experience, and therefore agreeable to reason as connected and referred to experience, that we should also be delighted with this union of music, poetry, and graceful action, joined to every circumstance of pomp and magnificence calculated to strike the senses of the spectator. Shall reason stand in the way, and tell us that we ought not to like what we know we do like, and prevent us from feeling the full effect of this complicated exertion of art? This is what I would understand by poets and painters being allowed to dare every thing; for what can be more daring, than accomplishing the purpose and end of art, by a complication of means, none of which have their archetypes in actual nature?

So far, therefore, is servile imitation from being necessary, that whatever is familiar, or in any way reminds us of what we see and hear every day, perhaps does not belong to the higher provinces of art, either in poetry or painting. The mind is to be transported, as Shakspeare expresses it, *beyond the ignorant present*, to ages past. Another and a higher order of beings is supposed; and to those beings every thing which is introduced into the work must correspond. Of this conduct, under these circumstances, the

Roman and Florentine schools afford sufficient examples. Their style by this means is raised and elevated above all others; and by the same means the compass of art itself is enlarged.

We often see grave and great subjects attempted by artists of another school; who though excellent in the lower class of art, proceeding on the principles which regulate that class, and not recollecting, or not knowing, that they were to address themselves to another faculty of the mind, have become perfectly ridiculous.

The picture which I have at present in my thoughts is a sacrifice of Iphigenia, painted by Jan Steen, a painter of whom I have formerly had occasion to speak with the highest approbation; and even in this picture, the subject of which is by no means adapted to his genius, there is nature and expression; but it is such expression, and the countenances are so familiar, and consequently so vulgar, and the whole accompanied with such finery of silks and velvets, that one would be almost tempted to doubt whether the artist did not purposely intend to burlesque his subject.

Instances of the same kind we frequently see in poetry. Parts of Hobbes' translation of Homer are remembered and repeated merely for the familiarity and meanness of their phraseology, so ill corresponding with the ideas which ought to have been expressed, and as I conceive, with the style of the original.

We may proceed in the same manner through the comparatively inferior branches of art. There are, in works of that class, the same distinction of a higher and a lower style; and they take their rank and degree in proportion as the artist departs more, or less, from common nature, and makes it an object of his attention to strike the imagination

of the spectator by ways belonging especially to art,—unobserved and untaught out of the school of its practice.

If our judgments are to be directed by narrow, vulgar, untaught, or rather ill-taught, reason, we must prefer a portrait by Denner, or any other high finisher, to those of Titian or Vandyck; and a landscape of Vanderheyden to those of Titian or Rubens; for they are certainly more exact representations of nature.

If we suppose a view of nature represented with all the truth of the *camera obscura*, and the same scene represented by a great artist, how little and mean will the one appear in comparison of the other, where no superiority is supposed from the choice of the subject! The scene shall be the same, the difference only will be in the manner in which it is presented to the eye. With what additional superiority then will the same artist appear when he has the power of selecting his materials as well as elevating his style? Like Nicolas Poussin, he transports us to the environs of ancient Rome, with all the objects which a literary education makes so precious and interesting to man; or, like Sebastian Bourdon, he leads us to the dark antiquity of the pyramids of Egypt; or, like Claude Lorrain, he conducts us to the tranquillity of Arcadian scenes and fairy-land.

Like the history-painter, a painter of landscapes in this style and with this conduct, sends the imagination back into antiquity; and, like the poet, he makes the elements sympathise with his subject: whether the clouds roll in volumes like those of Titian or Salvator Rosa,—or, like those of Claude, are gilded with the setting sun; whether the mountains have sudden and bold projections, or are gently sloped; whether the branches of his trees shoot out abruptly in right angles from their trunks, or follow each other with

only a gentle inclination. All these circumstances contribute to the general character of the work, whether it be of the elegant, or of the more sublime kind. If we add to this the powerful materials of lightness and darkness, over which the artist has complete dominion, to vary and dispose them as he pleases; to diminish or increase them as will best suit his purpose, and correspond to the general idea of his work; a landscape thus conducted, under the influence of a poetical mind will have the same superiority over the more ordinary and common views, as Milton's *Allegro* and *Penseroso* have over a cold prosaic narration or description; and such a picture would make a more forcible impression on the mind than the real scenes, were they presented before us.

If we look abroad to other arts, we may observe the same distinction, the same division into two classes; each of them acting under the influence of two different principles, in which the one follows nature, the other varies it, and sometimes departs from it.

The theatre, which is said *to hold the mirror up to nature*, comprehends both those ideas. The lower kind of comedy, or farce, like the inferior style of painting, the more naturally it is represented, the better; but the higher appears to me to aim no more at imitation, so far as it belongs to any thing like deception, or to expect that the spectators should think that the events there represented are really passing before them, than Raffaëlle in his Cartoons, or Poussin in his Sacraments, expected it to be believed, even for a moment, that what they exhibited were real figures.

For want of this distinction, the world is filled with false criticism. Raffaëlle is praised for naturalness and deception, which he certainly has not accomplished, and as cer-

tainly never intended; and our late great actor, Garrick, has been as ignorantly praised by his friend Fielding; who doubtless imagined he had hit upon an ingenious device, by introducing, in one of his novels (otherwise a work of the highest merit,) an ignorant man, mistaking Garrick's representation of a scene in Hamlet for reality. A very little reflection will convince us, that there is not one circumstance in the whole scene that is of the nature of deception. The merit and excellence of Shakspeare, and of Garrick, when they were engaged in such scenes, is of a different and much higher kind. But what adds to the falsity of this intended compliment, is, that the best stage-representation appears even more unnatural to a person of such a character, who is supposed never to have seen a play before, than it does to those who have had a habit of allowing for those necessary deviations from nature which the Art requires.

In theatric representation, great allowances must always be made for the place in which the exhibition is represented; for the surrounding company, the lighted candles, the scenes visibly shifted in your sight, and the language of blank verse, so different from common English; which merely as English must appear surprising in the mouths of Hamlet and all the court and natives of Denmark. These allowances are made; but their being made puts an end to all manner of deception: and further; we know that the more low, illiterate, and vulgar any person is, the less he will be disposed to make these allowances, and of course to be deceived by any imitation; the things in which the trespass against nature and common probability is made in favor of the theatre, being quite within the sphere of such uninformed men.

Though I have no intention of entering into all the circumstances of unnaturalness in theatrical representations I must observe that even the expression of violent passion is not always the most excellent in proportion as it is the most natural; so, great terror and such disagreeable sensations may be communicated to the audience, that the balance may be destroyed by which pleasure is preserved, and holds its predominancy in the mind: violent distortion of action, harsh screamings of the voice, however great the occasion, or however natural on such occasions, are therefore not admissible in the theatric art. Many of these allowed deviations from nature arise from the necessity which there is, that every thing should be raised and enlarged beyond its natural state; that the full effect may come home to the spectator, which otherwise would be lost in the comparatively extensive space of the Theatre. Hence the deliberate and stately step, the studied grace of action, which seems to enlarge the dimensions of the actor, and alone to fill the stage. All this unnaturalness, though right and proper in its place, would appear affected and ridiculous in a private room: *quid enim deformius quam scenam in vitam transferre?*

And here I must observe, and I believe it may be considered as a general rule, that no Art can be grafted with success on another art. For though they all profess the same origin, and to proceed from the same stock, yet each has its own peculiar modes both of imitating nature, and of deviating from it, each for the accomplishment of its own particular purpose. These deviations, more especially, will not bear transplantation to another soil.

If a Painter should endeavor to copy the theatrical pomp and parade of dress, and attitude, instead of that sim-

plicity, which is not a greater beauty in life than it is in Painting, we should condemn such pictures, as painted in the meanest style.

So, also, Gardening, as far as Gardening is an Art, or entitled to that appellation, is a deviation from nature ; for if the true taste consists, as many hold, in banishing every appearance of Art, or any traces of the footsteps of man, it would then be no longer a Garden. Even though we define it, "Nature to advantage dressed," and in some sense is such, and much more beautiful and commodious for the recreation of man ; it is, however, when so dressed, no longer a subject for the pencil of a Landscape-Painter, as all Landscape-Painters know, who love to have recourse to Nature herself, and to dress her according to the principles of their own Art ; which are far different from those of Gardening, even when conducted according to the most approved principles ; and such as a Landscape-Painter himself would adopt in the disposition of his own grounds, for his own private satisfaction.

I have brought together as many instances as appear necessary to make out the several points which I wished to suggest to your consideration in this Discourse ; that your own thoughts may lead you further in the use that may be made of the analogy of the Arts ; and of the restraint which a full understanding of the diversity of many of their principles ought to impose on the employment of that analogy. nb

The great end of all those arts is, to make an impression on the imagination and the feeling. The imitation of nature frequently does this. Sometimes it fails, and something else succeeds. I think, therefore, the true test of all the arts is not solely whether the production is a true copy

of nature, but whether it answers the end of art, which is, to produce a pleasing effect upon the mind.

It remains only to speak a few words of Architecture, which does not come under the denomination of an imitative art. It applies itself, like Music (and, I believe, we may add poetry,) directly to the imagination, without the intervention of any kind of imitation.

There is in Architecture, as in Painting, an inferior branch of art, in which the imagination appears to have no concern. It does not, however, acquire the name of a polite and liberal art from its usefulness, or administering to our wants or necessities, but from some higher principle; we are sure that in the hands of a man of genius it is capable of inspiring sentiment, and of filling the mind with great and sublime ideas.

It may be worth the attention of Artists to consider what materials are in their hands, that may contribute to this end; and whether this art has it not in its power to address itself to the imagination with effect, by more ways than are generally employed by Architects.

To pass over the effect produced by that general symmetry and proportion, by which the eye is delighted, as the ear is with music, Architecture certainly possesses many principles in common with Poetry and Painting. Among these which may be reckoned as the first, is, that of affecting the imagination by means of association of ideas. Thus, for instance, as we have naturally a veneration for antiquity, whatever building brings to our remembrance ancient customs and manners, such as the castles of the Barons of ancient Chivalry, is sure to give this delight. Hence it is that *towers and battlements** are so often selected by the

* Towers and Battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees.—MILTON, L'ALL.—R.

Painter and the Poet to make a part of the composition of their ideal Landscape; and it is from hence, in a great degree, that, in the buildings of Vanbrugh, who was a Poet as well as an Architect, there is a greater display of imagination, than we shall find perhaps in any other, and this is the ground of the effect we feel in many of his works, notwithstanding the faults with which many of them are justly charged. For this purpose, Vanbrugh appears to have had recourse to some of the principles of the Gothic Architecture; which, though not so ancient as the Grecian, is more so to our imagination, with which the Artist is more concerned than with absolute truth.

The Barbaric splendor of those Asiatic Buildings, which are now publishing by a member of this Academy,* may possibly, in the same manner, furnish an Architect, not with models to copy, but with hints of composition and general effect, which would not otherwise have occurred.

It is, I know, a delicate and hazardous thing (and, as such, I have already pointed it out) to carry the principles of one art to another, or even to reconcile in one object the various modes of the same art, when they proceed on different principles. The sound rules of the Grecian Architecture are not to be lightly sacrificed. A deviation from them, or even an addition to them, is like a deviation or addition to, or from, the rules of other Arts,—fit only for a great master, who is thoroughly conversant in the nature of man, as well as all combinations in his own Art.

It may not be amiss for the Architect to take advantage *sometimes* of that to which I am sure the Painter ought always to have his eyes open, I mean the use of accidents; to follow when they lead, and to improve them, rather than

* Mr. Hodges.

always to trust to a regular plan. It often happens that additions have been made to houses, at various times, for use or pleasure. As such buildings depart from regularity, they now and then acquire something of scenery by this accident, which I should think might not unsuccessfully be adopted by an Architect, in an original plan, if it does not too much interfere with convenience. Variety and intricacy is a beauty and excellence in every other of the arts which address the imagination; and why not in Architecture?

The forms and turnings of the streets of London and other old towns are produced by accident, without any original plan or design, but they are not always the less pleasant to the walker or spectator, on that account. On the contrary, if the city had been built on the regular plan of Sir Christopher Wren, the effect might have been, as we know it is in some new parts of the town, rather unpleasing; the uniformity might have produced weariness, and a slight degree of disgust.

I can pretend to no skill in the detail of Architecture. I judge now of the art, merely as a Painter. When I speak of Vanbrugh, I mean to speak of him in the language of our art. To speak then of Vanbrugh in the language of a painter, he had originality of invention, he understood light and shadow, and had great skill in composition. To support his principal object, he produced his second and third groups or masses; he perfectly understood in his art what is the most difficult in ours, the conduct of the back-ground; by which the design and invention is set off to the greatest advantage. What the back-ground is in Painting, in Architecture is the real ground on which the building is erected; and no Architect took greater care than he that his work

should not appear crude and hard ; that is, it did not abruptly start out of the ground without expectation or preparation.

This is a tribute which a Painter owes to an Architect who composed like a painter ; and was defrauded of the due reward of his merit by the wits of his time, who did not understand the principles of composition in poetry better than he ; and who knew little, or nothing, of what he understood perfectly, the general ruling principles of Architecture and Painting. His fate was that of the great Perrault ; both were the objects of the petulant sarcasms of factious men of letters ; and both have left some of the fairest ornaments which to this day decorate their several countries ; the facade of the Louvre, Blenheim, and Castle Howard.

Upon the whole it seems to me, that the object and intention of all the Arts is to supply the natural imperfection of things, and often to gratify the mind by realising and embodying what never existed but in the imagination.

It is allowed on all hands, that facts, and events, however they may bind the Historian, have no dominion over the Poet or the Painter. With us, History is made to bend and conform to this great idea of Art. And why ? Because these Arts, in their highest province, are not addressed to the gross senses ; but to the desires of the mind, to that spark of divinity which we have within, impatient of being circumscribed and pent up by the world which is about us. Just so much as our Art has of this, just so much of dignity, I had almost said of divinity, it exhibits ; and those of our Artists who possessed this mark of distinction in the highest degree, acquired from thence the glorious appellation of DIVINE.

DISCOURSE XIV.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1788.

Character of Gainsborough:—His Excellence and Defects.

GENTLEMEN,

IN the study of our art, as in the study of all arts, something is the result of *our own* observation of nature; something, and that not a little, the effect of the example of those who have studied the same nature before us, and who have cultivated before us the same art, with diligence and success. The less we confine ourselves in the choice of those examples, the more advantage we shall derive from them; and the nearer we shall bring our performances to a correspondence with nature and the great general rules of art. When we draw our examples from remote and revered antiquity—with some advantage undoubtedly in that selection—we subject ourselves to some inconveniencies. We may suffer ourselves to be too much led away by great names, and to be too much subdued by overbearing authority. Our learning, in that case, is not so much an exercise of our judgment, as a proof of our docility. We find ourselves, perhaps, too much overshadowed; and the character of our pursuits is rather distinguished by the tameness of the follower, than animated by the spirit of emulation. It is sometimes of service, that our examples should be *near* us; and such as raise a reverence, sufficient

to induce us carefully to observe them, yet not so great as to prevent us from engaging with them in something like a generous contention.

We have lately lost Mr. Gainsborough, one of the greatest ornaments of our Academy. It is not our business here, to make panegyrics on the living, or even on the dead who were of our body. The praise of the former might bear the appearance of adulation; and the latter of untimely justice; perhaps of envy to those whom we have still the happiness to enjoy, by an oblique suggestion of invidious comparisons. In discoursing, therefore, on the talents of the late Mr. Gainsborough, my object is, not so much to praise or to blame him, as to draw from his excellencies and defects, matter of instruction to the Students in our Academy. If ever this nation should produce genius sufficient to acquire to us the honorable distinction of an English School, the name of Gainsborough will be transmitted to posterity, in the history of the art, among the very first of that rising name. That our reputation in the Arts is now only rising, must be acknowledged; and we must expect our advances to be attended with old prejudices, as adversaries, and not as supporters; standing in this respect in a very different situation from the late artists of the Roman School, to whose reputation ancient prejudices have certainly contributed: the way was prepared for them, and they may be said rather to have lived in the reputation of their country, than to have contributed to it; whilst whatever celebrity is obtained by English Artists, can arise only from the operation of a fair and true comparison. And when they communicate to their country a share of their reputation, it is a portion of fame not borrowed from others, but solely acquired by their own labor and talents.

As Italy has undoubtedly a prescriptive right to an admiration bordering on prejudice, as a soil peculiarly adapted, congenial, and, we may add, destined to the production of men of great genius in our Art, we may not unreasonably suspect that a portion of the great fame of some of their late artists has been owing to the general readiness and disposition of mankind, to acquiesce in their original prepossessions in favor of the productions of the Roman School.

On this ground, however unsafe, I will venture to prophesy, that two of the last distinguished painters of that country, I mean Pompeo Battoni and Raffaele Mengs, however great their names may at present sound in our ears, will very soon fall into the rank of Imperiale, Sebastian Concha, Placido Constanza, Masaccio, and the rest of their immediate predecessors; whose names, though equally renowned in their lifetime, are now fallen into what is little short of total oblivion. I do not say that those painters were not superior to the artist I allude to, and whose loss we lament, in a certain routine of practice, which, to the eyes of common observers, has the air of a learned composition, and bears a sort of superficial resemblance to the manner of the great men who went before them. I know this perfectly well; but I know likewise, that a man looking for real and lasting reputation, must unlearn much of the common-place method so observable in the works of the artists whom I have named. For my own part, I confess, I take more interest in and am more captivated with the powerful impression of nature, which Gainsborough exhibited in his portraits and in his landscapes, and the interesting simplicity and elegance of his little ordinary beggar-children, than with any of the works of that School, since the time of Andrea Sacchi, or perhaps we may say Carlo

Maratti; two painters who may truly be said to be **ULTIMI ROMANORUM**.

I am well aware how much I lay myself open to the censure and ridicule of the academical professors of other nations, in preferring the humble attempts of Gainsborough to the works of those regular graduates in the great historical style. But we have the sanction of all mankind in preferring genius in a lower rank of art, to feebleness and insipidity in the highest.

It would not be to the present purpose, even if I had the means and materials, which I have not, to enter into the private life of Mr. Gainsborough. The history of his gradual advancement, and the means by which he acquired such excellence in his art, would come nearer to our purposes and wishes, if it were by any means attainable; but the slow progress of advancement is in general imperceptible to the man himself who makes it; it is the consequence of an accumulation of various ideas which his mind has received, he does not perhaps know how or when. Sometimes indeed it happens, that he may be able to mark the time when from the sight of a picture, a passage in an author, or a hint in conversation, he has received, as it were, some new and guiding light, something like inspiration, by which his mind has been expanded; and is morally sure that his whole life and conduct has been affected by that accidental circumstance. Such interesting accounts, we may however sometimes obtain from a man who has acquired an uncommon habit of self-examination, and has attended to the progress of his own improvement.

It may not be improper to make mention of some of the customs and habits of this extraordinary man; points which come more within the reach of an observer; I however mean

such only as are connected with his art, and indeed were, as I apprehend, the causes of his arriving to that high degree of excellence, which we see and acknowledge in his works. Of these causes we must state, as the fundamental, the love which he had to his art; to which, indeed, his whole mind appears to have been devoted, and to which every thing was referred; and this we may fairly conclude from various circumstances of his life, which were known to his intimate friends. Among others, he had a habit of continually remarking to those who happened to be about him, whatever peculiarity of countenance, whatever accidental combination of figure, or happy effects of light and shadow, occurred in prospects, in the sky, in walking the streets, or in company. If, in his walks, he found a character that he liked, and whose attendance was to be obtained, he ordered him to his house: and from the fields he brought into his painting-room, stumps of trees, weeds, and animals of various kinds; and designed them, not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table; composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water. How far this latter practice may be useful in giving hints, the professors of landscape can best determine. Like every other technical practice, it seems to me wholly to depend on the general talent of him who uses it. Such methods may be nothing better than contemptible and mischievous trifling; or they may be aids. I think, upon the whole, unless we constantly refer to real nature, that practice may be more likely to do harm than good. I mention it only, as it shows the solicitude and extreme activity which he had about every thing that related to his art; that he wished to have his objects

embodied as it were, and distinctly before him; that he neglected nothing which could keep his faculties in exercise, and derived hints from every sort of combination.

We must not forget, whilst we are on this subject, to make some remarks on his custom of painting by night, which confirms what I have already mentioned—his great affection to his art; since he could not amuse himself in the evening by any other means so agreeable to himself. I am indeed much inclined to believe that it is a practice very advantageous and improving to an artist: for by this means he will acquire a new and a higher perception of what is great and beautiful in nature. By candlelight, not only objects appear more beautiful, but from their being in a greater breadth of light and shadow, as well as having a greater breadth and uniformity of color, nature appears in a higher style; and even the flesh seems to take a higher and richer tone of color. Judgment is to direct us in the use to be made of this method of study; but the method itself is, I am very sure, advantageous. I have often imagined that the two great colorists, Titian and Correggio, though I do not know that they painted by night, formed their high ideas of coloring from the effects of objects by this artificial light: but I am more assured that whoever attentively studies the first and best manner of Guercino, will be convinced that he either painted by this light, or formed his manner on this conception.

Another practice Gainsborough had, which is worth mentioning, as it is certainly worthy of imitation; I mean his manner of forming all the parts of his picture together; the whole going on at the same time, in the same manner as nature creates her works. Though this method is not uncommon to those who have been regularly educated, yet

probably it was suggested to him by his own natural sagacity. That this custom is not universal, appears from the practice of a painter whom I have just mentioned, Pompeo Battoni, who finished his historical pictures part after part, and in his portraits completely finished one feature before he proceeded to another. The consequence was, as might be expected; the countenance was never well expressed; and, as the painters say, the whole was not well put together.

The first thing required to excel in our art, or I believe in any art, is not only a love for it, but even an enthusiastic ambition to excel in it. This never fails of success proportioned to the natural abilities with which the artist has been endowed by Providence. Of Gainsborough, we certainly know, that his passion was not the acquirement of riches, but excellence in his art; and to enjoy that honorable fame which is sure to attend it. That *he felt this ruling passion strong in death*, I am myself a witness. A few days before he died, he wrote me a letter, to express his acknowledgements for the good opinion I entertained of his abilities, and the manner in which (he had been informed) I always spoke of him; and desired he might see me once more before he died. I am aware how flattering it is to myself to be thus connected with the dying testimony which this excellent painter bore to his art. But I can not prevail on myself to suppress that I was not connected with him, by any habits of familiarity: if any little jealousies had subsisted between us, they were forgotten in those moments of sincerity; and he turned towards me as one who was engrossed by the same pursuits, and who deserved his good opinion, by being sensible of his excellence. Without entering into a detail of what passed at

this last interview, the impression of it upon my mind was, that his regret at losing life, was principally the regret of leaving his art; and more especially as he now began, he said, to see what his deficiencies were; which, he said he flattered himself in his last works were in some measure supplied.

When such a man as Gainsborough arrives to great fame, without the assistance of an academical education, without traveling to Italy, or any of those preparatory studies which have been so often recommended, he is produced as an instance how little such studies are necessary, since so great excellence may be acquired without them. This is an inference not warranted by the success of any individual; and I trust it will not be thought that I wish to make this use of it.

It must be remembered that the style and department of art which Gainsborough chose, and in which he so much excelled, did not require that he should go out of his own country for the objects of his study; they were every where about him; he found them in the streets, and in the fields, and from the models thus accidentally found, he selected with great judgment such as suited his purpose. As his studies were directed to the living world principally, he did not pay a general attention to the works of the various masters, though they are, in my opinion, always of great use, even when the character of our subject requires us to depart from some of their principles. It can not be denied, that excellence in the department of the art which he professed may exist without them; that in such subjects, and in the manner that belongs to them, the want of them is supplied, and more than supplied, by natural sagacity, and a minute observation of particular nature. If Gainsborough did

not look at nature with a poet's eye, it must be acknowledged that he saw her with the eye of a painter; and gave a faithful, if not a poetical, representation of what he had before him.

Though he did not much attend to the works of the great historical painters of former ages, yet he was well aware that the language of the art—the art of imitation—must be learned somewhere; and as he knew that he could not learn it in an equal degree from his contemporaries, he very judiciously applied himself to the Flemish School, who are undoubtedly the greatest masters of one necessary branch of art; and he did not need to go out of his own country for examples of that school: from that he learnt the harmony of coloring, the management and disposition of light and shadow, and every means which the masters of it practiced, to ornament and give splendor to their works. And to satisfy himself as well as others, how well he knew the mechanism and artifice which they employed to bring out that tone of color which we so much admire in their works, he occasionally made copies from Rubens, Teniers, and Vandyck, which it would be no disgrace to the most accurate connoisseur to mistake, at the first sight, for the works of those masters. What he thus learned, he applied to the originals of nature, which he saw with his own eyes; and imitated, not in the manner of those masters, but in his own.

Whether he most excelled in portraits, landscapes, or fancy-pictures, it is difficult to determine: whether his portraits were most admirable for exact truth of resemblance, or his landscapes for a portrait-like representation of nature, such as we see in the works of Rubens, Ruysdaal, and others of those schools. In his fancy pictures, when he had

fixed on his object of imitation, whether it was the mean and vulgar form of a wood-cutter, or a child of an interesting character, as he did not attempt to raise the one, so neither did he lose any of the natural grace and elegance, of the other; such a grace, and such an elegance, as are more frequently found in cottages than in courts. This excellence was his own, the result of his particular observation and taste; for this he was certainly not indebted to the Flemish School, nor indeed to any School; for his grace was not academical or antique, but selected by himself from the great school of nature; and there are yet a thousand modes of grace, which are neither theirs, nor his, but lie open in the multiplied scenes and figures of life, to be brought out by skilful and faithful observers.

Upon the whole, we may justly say, that whatever he attempted he carried to a high degree of excellence. It is to the credit of his good sense and judgment, that he never did attempt that style of historical painting, for which his previous studies had made no preparation.

And here it naturally occurs to oppose the sensible conduct of Gainsborough, in this respect, to that of our late excellent Hogarth, who, with all his extraordinary talents, was not blessed with this knowledge of his own deficiency; or of the bounds which were set to the extent of his own powers. After this admirable artist had spent the greater part of his life in an active, busy, and we may add, successful attention to the ridicule of life; after he had invented a new species of dramatic painting, in which probably he will never be equalled, and had stored his mind with infinite materials to explain and illustrate the domestic and familiar scenes of common life, which were generally, and ought to have been always, the subject of his pencil; he very impru-

dently, or rather presumptuously, attempted the great historical style, for which his previous habits had by no means prepared him : he was indeed so entirely unacquainted with the principles of this style, that he was not even aware that any artificial preparation was at all necessary. It is to be regretted, that any part of the life of such a genius should be fruitlessly employed. Let his failure teach us not to indulge ourselves in the vain imagination, that by a momentary resolution we can give either dexterity to the hand, or a new habit to the mind.

I have, however, little doubt, but that the same sagacity, which enabled those two extraordinary men to discover their true object, and the peculiar excellence of that branch of art which they cultivated, would have been equally effectual in discovering the principles of the higher style, if they had investigated those principles with the same eager industry which they exerted in their own department. As Gainsborough never attempted the heroic style so neither did he destroy the character and uniformity of his own style, by the idle affectation of introducing mythological learning in any of his pictures. Of this boyish folly we see instances enough, even in the works of great painters. When the Dutch School attempt this poetry of our art in their landscapes, their performances are beneath criticism ; they become only an object of laughter. This practice is hardly excusable, even in Claude Lorrain, who had shown more discretion, if he had never meddled with such subjects.

Our late ingenious Academician, Wilson, has, I fear, been guilty, like many of his predecessors, of introducing gods and goddesses, ideal beings, into scenes which were by no means prepared to receive such personages. His land-

scapes were in reality too near common nature to admit supernatural objects. In consequence of this mistake, in a very admirable picture of a storm, which I have seen of his hand, many figures are introduced in the foreground, some in apparent distress, and some struck dead, as a spectator would naturally suppose, by the lightning, had not the painter injudiciously (as I think) rather chosen that their death should be imputed to a little Apollo, who appears in the sky, with his bent bow, and that those figures should be considered as the children of Niobe.

To manage a subject of this kind, a peculiar style of art is required: and it can only be done without impropriety or even without ridicule, when we adapt the character of the landscape, and that too, in all its parts, to the historical or poetical representation. This is a very difficult adventure, and it requires a mind thrown back two thousand years, and as it were naturalized in antiquity, like that of Nicolo Poussin, to achieve it. In the picture alluded to, the first idea that presents itself is that of wonder, at seeing a figure in so uncommon a situation as that in which the Apollo is placed; for the clouds on which he kneels have not the appearance of being able to support him; they have neither the substance nor the form fit for the receptacle of a human figure; and they do not possess in any respect that romantic character which is appropriated to such an object, and which alone can harmonize with poetical stories.

It appears to me, that such conduct is no less absurd, than if a plain man, giving a relation of real distress occasioned by an inundation accompanied with thunder and lightning, should, instead of simply relating the event, take it into his head, in order to give a grace to his narration, to

talk of Jupiter Pluvius, or Jupiter and his thunderbolts, or any other figurative idea ; an intermixture which, though in poetry, with its proper preparations and accompaniments, it might be managed with effect, yet in the instance before us would counteract the purpose of the narrator, and, instead of being interesting, would be only ridiculous.

The Dutch and Flemish style of landscape, not even excepting those of Rubens, is unfit for poetical subjects : but to explain in what this ineptitude consists, or to point out all the circumstances that give nobleness, grandeur, and the poetic character, to style, in landscape, would require a long discourse of itself ; and the end would be then perhaps but imperfectly attained. The painter who is ambitious of this perilous excellence must catch his inspiration from those who have cultivated with success the poetry, as it may be called, of the art ; and they are few indeed.

I can not quit this subject without mentioning two examples which occur to me at present, in which the poetical style of landscape may be seen happily executed : the one is Jacob's Dream by Salvator Rosa, and the other the return of the Ark from Captivity, by Sebastian Bourdon.* With whatever dignity those histories are presented to us in the language of Scripture, this style of painting possesses the same power of inspiring sentiments of grandeur and sublimity, and is able to communicate them to subjects which appear by no means adapted to receive them. A ladder against the sky has no very promising appearance of possessing a capacity to excite any heroic ideas ; and the Ark, in the hands of a second-rate master, would have little more

* This fine picture was in our author's collection ; and was bequeathed by him to Sir George Beaumont, Bart.—M.

effect than a common wagon on the highway: yet those subjects are so poetically treated throughout, the parts have such a correspondence with each other, and the whole and every part of the scene is so visionary, that it is impossible to look at them, without feeling, in some measure, the enthusiasm which seems to have inspired the painters.

- By continual contemplation of such works, a sense of the higher excellencies of art will by degrees dawn on the imagination; at every review that sense will become more and more assured, until we come to enjoy a sober certainty of the real existence (if I may so express myself) of those almost ideal beauties; and the artist will then find no difficulty in fixing in his mind the principles by which the impression is produced; which he will feel and practice, though they are perhaps too delicate and refined, and too peculiar to the imitative art, to be conveyed to the mind by any other means.

To return to Gainsborough: the peculiarity of his manner, or style, or we may call it—the language in which he expressed his ideas, has been considered by many as his greatest defect. But without altogether wishing to enter into the discussion—whether this peculiarity was a defect or not, intermixed, as it was, with great beauties, of some of which it was probably the cause, it becomes a proper subject of criticism and inquiry to a painter.

A novelty and peculiarity of manner, as it is often a cause of our approbation, so likewise it is often a ground of censure; as being contrary to the practice of other painters, in whose manner we have been initiated, and in whose favor we have perhaps been prepossessed from our infancy; for, fond as we are of novelty, we are upon the whole creatures of habit. However, it is certain, that all those odd

scratches and marks, which, on a close examination, are so observable in Gainsborough's pictures, and which even to experienced painters appear rather the effect of accident than design: this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance, by a kind of magic, at a certain distance assumes form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places, so that we can hardly refuse acknowledging the full effect of diligence, under the appearance of chance and hasty negligence. That Gainsborough himself considered this peculiarity in his manner, and the power it possesses of exciting surprise, as a beauty in his works, I think may be inferred from the eager desire which we know he always expressed, that his pictures, at the Exhibition, should be seen near, as well as at a distance.

The slightness which we see in his best works can not always be imputed to negligence. However they may appear to superficial observers, painters know very well that a steady attention to the general effect takes up more time, and is much more laborious to the mind, than any mode of high finishing, or smoothness, without such attention. His *handling, the manner of leaving the colors*, or, in other words, the methods he used for producing the effect, had very much the appearance of the work of an artist who had never learned from others the usual and regular practice belonging to the art; but still, like a man of strong intuitive perception of what was required, he found out a way of his own to accomplish his purpose.

It is no disgrace to the genius of Gainsborough, to compare him to such men as we sometimes meet with, whose natural eloquence appears even in speaking a language which they can scarce be said to understand; and who, without knowing the appropriate expression of almost any one idea

contrive to communicate the lively and forcible impressions of an energetic mind.

I think some apology may reasonably be made for his manner without violating truth, or running any risk of poisoning the minds of the younger students, by propagating false criticism, for the sake of raising the character of a favorite artist. It must be allowed, that this hatching manner of Gainsborough did very much contribute to the lightness of effect which is so eminent a beauty in his pictures; as, on the contrary, much smoothness, and uniting the colors, is apt to produce heaviness. Every artist must have remarked, how often that lightness of hand which was in his dead color, or first painting, escaped in the finishing when he had determined the parts with more precision; and another loss he often experiences, which is of greater consequence; whilst he is employed in the detail, the effect of the whole together is either forgotten or neglected. The likeness of a portrait, as I have formerly observed, consists more in preserving the general effect of the countenance, than in the most minute finishing of the features, or any of the particular parts. Now, Gainsborough's portraits were often little more, in regard to finishing, or determining the form of the features, than what generally attends a dead color; but as he was always attentive to the general effect, or whole together, I have often imagined that this unfinished manner contributed even to that striking resemblance for which his portraits are so remarkable. Though this opinion may be considered as fanciful, yet I think a plausible reason may be given, why such a mode of painting should have such an effect. It is pre-supposed that in this undetermined manner there is the general effect; enough to remind the spectator of the original; the imagination sup-

plies the rest, and perhaps more satisfactorily to himself, if not more exactly, than the artist, with all his care, could possibly have done. At the same time it must be acknowledged there is one evil attending this mode; that if the portrait were seen previous to any knowledge of the original, different persons would form different ideas, and all would be disappointed at not finding the original correspond with their own conceptions; under the great latitude which indistinctness gives to the imagination to assume almost what character or form it pleases.

Every artist has some favorite part, on which he fixes his attention, and which he pursues with such eagerness, that it absorbs every other consideration; and he often falls into the opposite error of that which he would avoid, which is always ready to receive him. Now, Gainsborough, having truly a painter's eye for coloring, cultivated those effects of the art which proceed from colors: and sometimes appears to be indifferent to or to neglect other excellencies. Whatever defects are acknowledged, let him still experience from us the same candor that we so freely give upon similar occasions to the ancient masters; let us not encourage that fastidious disposition, which is discontented with every thing short of perfection, and unreasonably require, as we sometimes do, a union of excellencies, not perhaps quite compatible with each other. We may, on this ground, say even of the divine Raffaele, that he might have finished his picture as highly and as correctly as was his custom, without heaviness of manner; and that Poussin might have preserved all his precision without hardness or dryness.

To show the difficulty of uniting solidity with lightness of manner, we may produce a picture of Rubens in the church of St. Gudule, at Brussels, as an example; the sub-

ject is, *Christ's Charge to Peter*; which as it is the highest and smoothest finished picture I remember to have seen of that master, so it is by far the heaviest; and if I had found it in any other place, I should have suspected it to be a copy; for painters know very well, that it is principally by this air of facility, or the want of it, that originals are distinguished from copies. A lightness of effect produced by color, and that produced by facility of handling, are generally united; a copy may preserve something of the one, it is true, but hardly ever of the other; a connoisseur therefore finds it often necessary to look carefully into the picture before he determines on its originality. Gainsborough possessed this quality of lightness of manner and effect, I think, to an unexampled degree of excellence; but it must be acknowledged, at the same time, that the sacrifice which he made to this ornament of our art, was too great; it was, in reality, preferring the lesser excellencies to the greater.

To conclude. However we may apologise for the deficiencies of Gainsborough (I mean particularly his want of precision and finishing,) who so ingeniously contrived to cover his defects by his beauties; and who cultivated that department of art, where such defects are more easily excused; you are to remember, that no apology can be made for this deficiency, in that style which this Academy teaches, and which ought to be the object of your pursuit. It will be necessary for you, in the first place, never to lose sight of the great rules and principles of the art, as they are collected from the full body of the best general practice, and the most constant and uniform experience; this must be the groundwork of all your studies: afterwards you may profit, as in this case I wish you to profit, by the peculiar

experience and personal talents of artists living and dead ; you may derive lights, and catch hints, from their practice ; but the moment you turn them into models, you fall infinitely below them ; you may be corrupted by excellencies, not so much belonging to the art, as personal and appropriated to the artist ; and become bad copiers of good painters, instead of excellent imitators of the great universal truth of things.

DISCOURSE XV.

Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 10, 1790.

The President takes leave of the Academy.—A Review of the Discourses.—The Study of the Works of Michael Angelo recommended.

GENTLEMEN,

THE intimate connection which I have had with the ROYAL ACADEMY ever since its establishment, the social duties in which we have all mutually engaged for so many years, make any profession of attachment to this Institution, on my part, altogether superfluous; the influence of habit alone in such a connection would naturally have produced it.

Among men united in the same body, and engaged in the same pursuit, along with permanent friendship occasional differences will arise. In these disputes men are naturally too favorable to themselves, and think perhaps too hardly of their antagonists. But composed and constituted as we are, those little contentions will be lost to others, and they ought certainly to be lost amongst ourselves in mutual esteem for talents and acquirements: every controversy ought to be, and I am persuaded will be, sunk in our zeal for the perfection of our common Art.

In parting with the Academy, I shall remember with pride, affection, and gratitude, the support with which I have almost uniformly been honored from the commencement of our intercourse. I shall leave you, Gentlemen, with unaffected cordial wishes for your future concord, and

with a well-founded hope, that in that concord the auspicious and not obscure origin of our Academy may be forgotten in the splendor of your succeeding prospects.

My age, and my infirmities still more than my age, make it probable that this will be the last time I shall have the honor of addressing you from this place. Excluded as I am, *spatiis iniquis*, from indulging my imagination with a distant and forward perspective of life, I may be excused if I turn my eyes back on the way which I have passed.

We may assume to ourselves, I should hope, the credit of having endeavored, at least, to fill with propriety that middle station which we hold in the general connection of things. Our predecessors have labored for our advantage, we labor for our successors; and though we have done no more in this mutual intercourse and reciprocation of benefits, than has been effected by other societies formed in this nation for the advancement of useful and ornamental knowledge, yet there is one circumstance which appears to give us an higher claim than the credit of merely doing our duty. What I at present allude to, is the honor of having been, some of us, the first contrivers, and all of us the promoters and supporters, of the annual Exhibition. This scheme could only have originated from Artists already in possession of the favor of the public; as it would not have been so much in the power of others to have excited curiosity. It must be remembered, that for the sake of bringing forward into notice concealed merit, they incurred the risk of producing rivals to themselves; they voluntarily entered the lists, and ran the race a second time for the prize which they had already won.

When we take a review of the several department of the Institution, I think we may safely congratulate our-

selves on our good fortune in having hitherto seen the chairs of our Professors filled with men of distinguished abilities, and who have so well acquitted themselves of their duty in their several departments. I look upon it to be of importance, that none of them should be ever left unfilled : a neglect to provide for qualified persons, is to produce a neglect of qualifications.

In this honorable rank of Professors, I have not presumed to class myself; though in the Discourses which I have had the honor of delivering from this place, while in one respect I may be considered as a volunteer, in another view it seems as if I was involuntarily pressed into this service. If prizes were to be given, it appeared not only proper, but almost indispensably necessary, that something should be said by the President on the delivery of those prizes : and the President for his own credit would wish to say something more than mere words of compliment, which, by being frequently repeated, would soon become flat and uninteresting, and by being uttered to many, would at last become a distinction to none ; I thought, therefore, if I were to preface this compliment with some instructive observations on the Art, when we crowned merit in the Artists whom we rewarded, I might do something to animate and guide them in their future attempts.

I am truly sensible how unequal I have been to the expression of my own ideas. To develop the latent excellencies, and draw out the interior principles, of our art, requires more skill and practice in writing, than is likely to be possessed by a man perpetually occupied in the use of the pencil and the pallet. It is for that reason, perhaps, that the sister Art has had the advantage of better criticism. Poets are naturally writers of prose. They may be said to

be practicing only an inferior department of their own art when they are explaining and expatiating upon its most refined principles. But still such difficulties ought not to deter Artists, who are not prevented by other engagements, from putting their thoughts in order as well as they can, and from giving to the public the result of their experience. The knowledge which an Artist has of his subject will more than compensate for any want of elegance in the manner of treating it, or even of perspicuity, which is still more essential; and I am convinced that one short essay written by a Painter, will contribute more to advance the theory of our art, than a thousand volumes such as we sometimes see: the purpose of which appears to be rather to display the refinement of the Author's own conceptions of impossible practice, than to convey useful knowledge or instruction of any kind whatever. An Artist knows what is, and what is not, within the province of his art to perform; and is not likely to be for ever teasing the poor Student with the beauties of mixed passions, or to perplex him with an imaginary union of excellencies incompatible with each other.

To this work, however, I could not be said to come totally unprovided with materials. I had seen much, and I had thought much upon what I had seen; I had something of an habit of investigation, and a disposition to reduce all that I observed and felt in my own mind, to method and system; but never having seen what I myself knew, distinctly placed before me on paper, I knew nothing correctly. To put those ideas into something like order was, to my inexperience, no easy task. The composition, the *ponere totum* even of a single Discourse, as well as of a single statue, was the most difficult part, as perhaps it is of every other art, and most requires the hand of a master.

For the manner, whatever deficiency there was, I might reasonably expect indulgence; but I thought it indispensably necessary well to consider the opinions which were to be given out from this place, and under the sanction of a Royal Academy; I therefore examined not only my own opinions, but likewise the opinions of others. I found in the course of this research, many precepts and rules established in our art, which did not seem to me altogether reconcileable with each other, yet each seemed in itself to have the same claim of being supported by truth and nature; and this claim, irreconcilable as they may be thought, they do in reality alike possess.

To clear away those difficulties, and reconcile those contrary opinions, it became necessary to distinguish the greater truth, as it may be called, from the lesser truth; the larger and more liberal idea of nature from the more narrow and confined; that which addresses itself to the imagination, from that which is solely addressed to the eye. In consequence of this discrimination, the different branches of our art, to which those different truths were referred, were perceived to make so wide a separation, and put on so new an appearance, that they seemed scarcely to have proceeded from the same general stock. The different rules and regulations, which presided over each department of art, followed of course: every mode of excellence, from the grand style of the Roman and Florentine Schools down to the lowest rank of still life, had its due weight and value, —fitted some class or other; and nothing was thrown away. By this disposition of our art into classes, that perplexity and confusion, which I apprehend every Artist has at some time experienced from the variety of styles, and the variety of excellence with which he is surrounded, is, I

should hope, in some measure removed, and the student better enabled to judge for himself, what peculiarly belongs to his own particular pursuit.

In reviewing my Discourses, it is no small satisfaction to be assured that I have, in no part of them, lent my assistance to foster *newly-hatched unfledged* opinions, or endeavored to support paradoxes, however tempting may have been their novelty, or however ingenious I might, for the minute, fancy them to be; nor shall I, I hope, any where be found to have imposed on the minds of young Students declamation for argument, a smooth period for a sound precept. I have pursued a plain and *honest method*: I have taken up the art simply as I found it exemplified in the practice of the most approved Painters. That approbation which the world has uniformly given, I have endeavored to justify by such proofs as questions of this kind will admit; by the analogy which Painting holds with the sister Arts, and consequently by the common congeniality which they all bear to our nature. And though in what has been done no new discovery is pretended, I may still flatter myself, that from the discoveries which others have made by their own intuitive good sense and native rectitude of judgment, I have succeeded in establishing the rules and principles of our art on a more firm and lasting foundation than that on which they had formerly been placed.

Without wishing to divert the Student from the practice of his Art to speculative theory, to make him a mere connoisseur instead of a Painter, I can not but remark, that he will certainly find an account in considering once for all, on what ground the fabric of our art is built. Uncertain, confused, or erroneous opinions are not only detrimental to an Artist in their immediate operation, but may possibly

have very serious consequences ; affect his conduct, and give a peculiar character (as it may be called) to his taste, and to his pursuits, through his whole life.

I was acquainted at Rome in the early part of my life, with a Student of the French Academy, who appeared to me to possess all the qualities requisite to make a great Artist, if he had suffered his taste and feelings, and I may add even his prejudices, to have fair play. He saw and felt the excellencies of the great works of Art with which we were surrounded, but lamented that there was not to be found that Nature which is so admirable in the inferior schools ; and he supposed with Felibien, Du Piles, and other theorists, that such an union of different excellencies would be the perfection of Art. He was not aware, that the narrow idea of nature, of which he lamented the absence in the works of those great Artists, would have destroyed the grandeur of the general ideas which he admired, and which was indeed the cause of his admiration. My opinions being then confused and unsettled, I was in danger of being borne down by this kind of plausible reasoning, though I remember I then had a dawning of suspicion that it was not sound doctrine ; and at the same time I was unwilling obstinately to refuse assent to what I was unable to confute.

That the young Artist may not be seduced from the right path, by following, what, at first view, he may think the light of Reason, and which is indeed Reason in part, but not in the whole, has been much the object of these Discourses.

I have taken every opportunity of recommending a rational method of study, as of the last importance. The great, I may say the sole use of an Academy is, to put, and for some time to keep, Students in that course, that too

much indulgence may not be given to peculiarity, and that a young man may not be taught to believe, that what is generally good for others is not good for him.

I have strongly inculcated in my former Discourses, as I do in this, my last, the wisdom and necessity of previously obtaining the appropriated instruments of the Art, in a first correct design, and a plain manly coloring before any thing more is attempted. But by this I would not wish to cramp and fetter the mind, or discourage those who follow (as most of us may at one time have followed) the suggestion of a strong inclination: something must be conceded to great and irresistible impulses: perhaps every Student must not be strictly bound to general methods, if they strongly thwart the peculiar turn of his own mind. I must confess that it is not absolutely of much consequence, whether he proceeds in the general method of seeking first to acquire mechanical accuracy, before he attempts poetical flights, provided he diligently studies to attain the full perfection of the style he pursues; whether like Parmegiano, he endeavors at grace and grandeur of manner before he has learned correctness of drawing, if like him he feels his own wants, and will labor, as that eminent artist did, to supply those wants; whether he starts from the East or from the West, if he relaxes in no exertion to arrive ultimately at the same goal. The first public work of Parmegiano is the St. Eustachius, in the church of St. Petronius in Bologna, and was done when he was a boy; and one of the last of his works is the Moses breaking the tables in Parma. In the former there is certainly something of grandeur in the outline, or in the conception of the figure, which discovers the dawnings of future greatness, of a young mind impregnated with the sublimity of Michael Angelo, whose style

he here attempts to imitate, though he could not then draw the human figure with any common degree of correctness. But this same Parmegiano, when in his more mature age he painted the Moses, had so completely supplied his first defects, that we are here at a loss which to admire most, the correctness of drawing, or the grandeur of the conception. As a confirmation of its great excellence, and of the impression which it leaves on the minds of elegant spectators, I may observe, that our great Lyric Poet, when he conceived his sublime idea of the indignant Welsh Bard, acknowledged, that though many years had intervened, he had warmed his imagination with the remembrance of this noble figure of Parmegiano.

When we consider that Michael Angelo was the great archetype to whom Parmegiano was indebted for that grandeur which we find in his works, and from whom all his contemporaries and successors have derived whatever they have possessed of the dignified and the majestic; that he was the bright luminary, from whom Painting has borrowed a new lustre; that under his hands it assumed a new appearance, and is become another and superior art; I may be excused if I take this opportunity, as I have hitherto taken every occasion, to turn your attention to this exalted Founder and Father of Modern Art, of which he was not only the inventor, but which, by the divine energy of his own mind, he carried at once to its highest point of possible perfection.

The sudden maturity to which Michael Angelo brought our Art, and the comparative feebleness of his followers and imitators, might perhaps be reasonably, at least plausibly explained, if we had time for such an examination. At present I shall only observe, that the subordinate parts of

our Art, and perhaps of other Arts, expand themselves by a slow and progressive growth ; but those which depend on a native vigor of imagination generally burst forth at once in fulness of beauty. Of this Homer probably, and Shakspeare more assuredly, are signal examples. Michael Angelo possessed the poetical part of our art in a most eminent degree ; and the same daring spirit, which urged him first to explore the unknown regions of the imagination, delighted with the novelty, and animated by the success of his discoveries, could not have failed to stimulate and impel him forward in his career beyond those limits, which his followers, destitute of the same incentives, had not strength to pass.

To distinguish between correctness of drawing, and that part which respects the imagination, we may say the one approaches to the mechanical, (which in its way too may make just pretensions to genius,) and the other to the poetical. To encourage a solid and vigorous course of study, it may not be amiss to suggest, that perhaps a confidence in the mechanic produces a boldness in the poetic. He that is sure of the goodness of his ship and tackle, puts out fearlessly from the shore ; and he who knows that his hand can execute whatever his fancy can suggest, sports with more freedom in embodying the visionary forms of his own creation. I will not say Michael Angelo was eminently poetical, only because he was greatly mechanical ; but I am sure that mechanic excellence invigorated and emboldened his mind to carry painting into the regions of poetry, and to emulate that art in its most adventurous flights. Michael Angelo equally possessed both qualifications. Yet of mechanic excellence there were certainly great examples to be found in Ancient Sculpture, and par-

ticularly in the fragment known by the name of the Torso of Michael Angelo ; but of that grandeur of character, air, and attitude, which he threw into all his figures, and which so well corresponds with the grandeur of his outline, there was no example ; it could therefore proceed only from the most poetical and sublime imagination.

It is impossible not to express some surprise, that the race of Painters who preceded Michael Angelo, men of acknowledged great abilities, should never have thought of transferring a little of that grandeur of outline which they could not but see and admire in Ancient Sculpture, into their own works ; but they appear to have considered Sculpture as the later Schools of Artists look at the inventions of Michael Angelo,—as something to be admired, but with which they have nothing to do : *quod super nos, nihil ad nos*. The Artists of that age, even Raffaëlle himself, seemed to be going on very contentedly in the dry manner of Pietro Perugino ; and if Michael Angelo had never appeared, the Art might still have continued in the same style.

Beside Rome and Florence, where the grandeur of this style was first displayed, it was on this Foundation that the Caracci built the truly great Academical Bolognian school, of which the first stone was laid by Pellegrino Tibaldi. He first introduced this style among them ; and many instances might be given in which he appears to have possessed as by inheritance, the true, genuine, noble and elevated mind of Michael Angelo. Though we can not venture to speak of him with the same fondness as his countrymen, and call him, as the Caracci did, *Nostro Michael Angelo riformato* ; yet he has a right to be considered amongst the first and greatest of his followers ; there are certainly many drawings and inventions of his, of which Michael Angelo himself

might not disdain to be supposed the author, or that they should be, as in fact they often are, mistaken for his. I will mention one particular instance, because it is found in a book which is in every young Artist's hand ;—Bishop's Ancient Statues. He there has introduced a print, representing Polyphemus, from a drawing of Tibaldi, and has inscribed it with the name of Michael Angelo, to whom he has also in the same book attributed a Sybil of Raffaello. Both these figures, it is true, are professedly in Michael Angelo's style and spirit, and even worthy of his hand. But we know that the former is painted in the *Institute a Bologna* by Tibaldi, and the other in the *Pace* by Raffaello.

The Caracci, it is acknowledged, adopted the mechanical part with sufficient success. But the divine part which addresses itself to the imagination, as possessed by Michael Angelo or Tibaldi, was beyond their grasp : they formed, however, a most respectable school, a style more on the level, and calculated to please a greater number ; and if excellence of this kind is to be valued according to the number, rather than the weight and quality of admirers, it would assume even a higher rank in art. The same, in some sort, may be said of Tintoret, Paulo Veronese, and others of the Venetian Painters. They certainly much advanced the dignity of their style by adding to their fascinating powers of coloring something of the strength of Michael Angelo ; at the same time it may still be a doubt, how far their ornamental elegance would be an advantageous addition to his grandeur. But if there is any manner of Painting which may be said to unite kindly with his style, it is that of Titian. His handling, the manner in which his colors are left on the canvass, appears to proceed

(as far as that goes) from a congenial mind, equally disdainful of vulgar criticism.

MICHAEL ANGELO'S strength thus qualified, and made more palatable to the general taste, reminds me of an observation which I heard a learned critic* make, when it was accidentally remarked, that our translation of Homer, however excellent, did not convey the character, nor had the grand air of the original. He replied, that if Pope had not clothed the naked Majesty of Homer with the graces and elegancies of modern fashions,—though the real dignity of Homer was degraded by such a dress, his translation would not have met with such a favorable reception, and he must have been contented with fewer readers.

Many of the Flemish painters, who studied at Rome in that great era of our art, such as Francis Rloris, Hemskirk, Michael Coxis, Jerom Cock, and others, returned to their own country with as much of this grandeur as they could carry. But like seeds falling on a soil not prepared or adapted to their nature, the manner of Michael Angelo thrived but little with them; perhaps, however, they contributed to prepare the way for that free, unconstrained, and liberal outline, which was afterwards introduced by Rubens through the medium of the Venetian Painters.

The grandeur of style has been in different degrees disseminated over all Europe. Some caught it by living at the time, and coming into contact with the original author, whilst others received it at second hand; and being everywhere adopted, it has totally changed the whole taste and style of design, if there could be said to be any style before his time. Our art, in consequence, now assumes a rank to

* Dr. Johnson.

which it could never have dared to aspire, if Michael Angelo had not discovered to the world the hidden powers which it possessed. Without his assistance we never could have been convinced, that Painting was capable of producing an adequate representation of the persons and actions of the heroes of the Iliad.

I would ask any man qualified to judge of such works, whether he can look with indifference at the personification of the Supreme Being in the centre of the Capella Sestina, or the figures of the Sybils which surround that chapel, to which we may add the statue of Moses; and whether the same sensations are not excited by those works, as what he may remember to have felt from the most sublime passages of Homer? I mention those figures more particularly, as they come nearer to a comparison with his Jupiter, his demi-gods, and heroes; those Sybils and Prophets being a kind of intermediate beings between men and angels. Though instances may be produced in the works of other Painters, which may justly stand in competition with those I have mentioned, such as the Isaiah, and the vision of Ezekiel, by Raffaello, the St. Mark of Frate Bartolomeo, and many others; yet these, it must be allowed, are inventions so much in Michael Angelo's manner of thinking, that they may be truly considered as so many rays, which discover manifestly the centre from whence they emanated.

The sublime in Painting, as in Poetry, so overpowers, and takes such a possession of the whole mind, that no room is left for attention to minute criticism. The little elegancies of art in the presence of these great ideas thus greatly expressed, lose all their value, and are, for the instant at least, felt to be unworthy of our notice. The correct judgment, the purity of taste which characterise

Raffaello, the exquisite grace of Correggio and Parmigiano, all disappear before them.

That Michael Angelo was capricious in his inventions, can not be denied; and this may make some circumspection necessary in studying his works; for though they appear to become him, an imitation of them is always dangerous, and will prove sometimes ridiculous. "Within that circle none durst walk but he." To me, I confess, his caprice does not lower the estimation of his genius, even though it is sometimes, I acknowledge, carried to the extreme: and however those eccentric excursions are considered, we must at the same time recollect that those faults, if they are faults, are such as never could occur to a mean and vulgar mind: that they flowed from the same source which produced his greatest beauties, and were therefore such as none but himself was capable of committing: they were the powerful impulses of a mind unused to subjection of any kind, and too high to be controlled by cold criticism.

Many see his daring extravagance, who can see nothing else. A young Artist finds the works of Michael Angelo so totally different from those of his own master, or of those with whom he is surrounded, that he may be easily persuaded to abandon and neglect studying a style which appears to him wild, mysterious, and above his comprehension, and which he therefore feels no disposition to admire; a good disposition, which he concludes that he should naturally have, if the style deserved it. It is necessary, therefore, that students should be prepared for the disappointment which they may experience at their first setting out; and they must be cautioned, that probably they will not, at first sight, approve.

It must be remembered, that this great style itself is

artificial in the highest degree : it presupposes in the spectator, a cultivated and prepared artificial state of mind. It is an absurdity therefore, to suppose that we are born with this taste, though we are with the seeds of it, which, by the heat and kindly influence of this genius, may be ripened in us.

A late Philosopher and Critic* has observed, speaking of taste, that *we are on no account to expect that fine things should descend to us*—our taste, if possible, must be made to ascend to them. The same learned writer recommends to us *even to feign a relish, till we find a relish come; and feel, that what began in fiction, terminates in reality*. If there be in our Art any thing of that agreement or compact, such as I apprehend there is in music, with which the Critic is necessarily required previously to be acquainted, in order to form a correct judgment : the comparison with this art will illustrate what I have said on these points, and tend to show the probability, we may say the certainty, that men are not born with a relish for those arts in their most refined state, which as they can not understand, they can not be impressed with their effects. This great style of Michael Angelo is as far removed from the simple representation of the common objects of nature, as the most refined Italian music is from the inartificial notes of nature, from whence they both profess to originate. But without such a supposed compact, we may be very confident that the highest state of refinement in either of those arts will not be relished without a long and industrious attention.

In pursuing this great Art, it must be acknowledged that we labor under greater difficulties than those who were born in the age of its discovery, and whose minds from their

* James Harris, Esq.—R.

infancy were habituated to this style; who learned it as language, as their mother tongue. They had no mean taste to unlearn; they needed no persuasive discourse to allure them to a favorable reception of it, no abstruse investigation of its principles to convince them of the great latent truths on which it is founded. We are constrained, in these latter days, to have recourse to a sort of Grammar and Dictionary, as the only means of recovering a dead language. It was by them learned by rote, and perhaps better learned that way than by precept.

The style of Michael Angelo, which I have compared to language, and which may, poetically speaking, be called the language of the gods, now no longer exists, as it did in the fifteenth century; yet, with the aid of diligence, we may in a great measure supply the deficiency which I mentioned—of not having his works so perpetually before our eyes—by having recourse to casts from his models and designs in Sculpture; to drawings, or even copies of those drawings; to prints, which, however ill executed, still convey something by which this taste may be formed, and a relish may be fixed and established in our minds for this grand style of invention. Some examples of this kind we have in the Academy; and I sincerely wish there were more, that the younger students might in their first nourishment imbibe this taste; whilst others, though settled in the practice of the common-place style of Painters, might infuse, by this means, a grandeur into their works.

I shall now make some remarks on the course which I think most proper to be pursued in such a study. I wish you not to go so much to the derivative streams, as to the fountain-head; though the copies are not to be neglected; because they may give you hints in what manner you

may copy, and how the genius of one man may be made to fit the peculiar manner of another.

To recover this lost taste, I would recommend young Artists to study the works of Michael Angelo, as he himself did the works of the ancient Sculptors; he began when a child, a copy of a mutilated Satyr's head, and finished in his model what was wanting in the original. In the same manner, the first exercise that I would recommend to the young artist when he first attempts invention, is, to select every figure, if possible, from the inventions of Michael Angelo. If such borrowed figures will not bend to his purpose, and he is constrained to make a change to supply a figure himself, that figure will necessarily be in the same style with the rest; and his taste will by this means be naturally initiated, and nursed in the lap of grandeur. He will sooner perceive what constitutes this grand style by one practical trial than by a thousand speculations, and he will in some sort procure to himself that advantage which in these later ages has been denied him; the advantage of having the greatest of Artists for his master and instructor.

The next lesson should be, to change the purpose of the figures without changing the attitude, as Tintoret has done with the Samson of Michael Angelo. Instead of the figure which Samson bestrides, he has placed an eagle under him; and instead of the jaw-bone, thunder and lightning in his right hand; and thus it becomes a Jupiter. Titian, in the same manner, has taken the figure which represents God dividing the light from the darkness in the vault of the Capella Sestina, and has introduced it in the famous battle of Cadore, so much celebrated by Vasari; and extraordinary as it may seem, it is here con-

verted to a general, falling from his horse. A real judge who should look at this picture, would immediately pronounce the attitude of that figure to be in a greater style than any other figure of the composition. These two instances may be sufficient, though many more might be given in their works, as well as in those of other great Artists.

When the Student has been habituated to this grand conception of the Art, when the relish for this style is established, makes a part of himself, and is woven into his mind, he will, by this time, have got a power of selecting from whatever occurs in nature that is grand, and corresponds with that taste which he has now acquired, and will pass over whatever is common-place and insipid. He may then bring to the mart such works of his own proper invention as may enrich and increase the general stock of invention in our Art.

I am confident of the truth and propriety of the advice which I have recommended; at the same time I am aware, how much by this advice I have laid myself open to the sarcasms of those critics who imagine our Art to be a matter of inspiration. But I should be sorry it should appear even to myself that I wanted that courage which I have recommended to the Students in another way: equal courage perhaps is required in the adviser and the advised; they both must equally dare and bid defiance to narrow criticism and vulgar opinion.

That the Art has been in a gradual state of decline, from the age of Michael Angelo to the present, must be acknowledged; and we may reasonably impute this declension to the same cause to which the ancient Critics and Philosophers have imputed the corruption of eloquence.

Indeed the same causes are likely at all times and in all ages to produce the same effects; indolence—not taking the same pains as our great predecessors took—desiring to find a shorter way—are the general imputed causes. The words of Petronius* are very remarkable. After opposing the natural chaste beauty of the eloquence of former ages to the strained inflated style then in fashion, “neither,” says he, “has the Art of Painting had a better fate, after the boldness of the Egyptians had found out a compendious way to execute so great an art.”

By *compendious*, I understand him to mean a mode of Painting, such as has infected the style of the later Painters of Italy and France; common-place, without thought, and with as little trouble, working as by a receipt; in contradistinction to that style for which even a relish can not be acquired without care and long attention, and most certainly the power of executing can not be obtained without the most laborious application.

I have endeavored to stimulate the ambition of Artists to tread in this great path of glory, and, as well as I can, have pointed out the track which leads to it, and have at the same time told them the price at which it may be obtained. It is an ancient saying, that labor is the price which the gods have set upon every thing valuable.

The great Artist who has been so much the subject of the present Discourse, was distinguished even from his infancy for his indefatigable diligence; and this was continued through his whole life, till prevented by extreme old age. The poorest of men, as he observed himself, did not labor from necessity, more than he did from choice. In-

* *Pictura quoque non alium exitum fecit, postquam Ægyptiorum audacia tam magnæ artis compendiarium invenit.*—R.

deed, from all the circumstances related of his life, he appears not to have had the least conception that his art was to be acquired by any other means than great labor; and yet he, of all men that ever lived, might make the greatest pretensions to the efficacy of native genius and inspiration. I have no doubt that he would have thought it no disgrace, that it should be said of him, as he himself said of Raffaelle, that he did not possess his art from nature, but by long study.* He was conscious that the great excellence to which he arrived was gained by dint of labor, and was unwilling to have it thought that any transcendant skill, however natural its effects might seem, could be purchased at a cheaper price than he had paid for it. This seems to have been the true drift of his observation. We can not suppose it made with any intention of depreciating the genius of Raffaelle, of whom he always spoke, as Condivi says, with the greatest respect: though they were rivals, no such illiberality existed between them; and Raffaelle on his part entertained the greatest veneration for Michael Angelo, as appears from the speech which is recorded of him, that he congratulated himself, and thanked God, that he was born in the same age with that painter.

If the high esteem and veneration in which Michael Angelo has been held by all nations and in all ages, should be put to the account of prejudice, it must still be granted that those prejudices, could not have been entertained without a cause: the ground of our prejudice then becomes the source of our admiration. But from whatever it proceeds, or whatever it is called, it will not, I hope, be thought presumptuous in me to appear in the train, I can not say of

* *Che Raffaelle non ebbe quest' arte da natura, ma per lungo studio.—R.*

his imitators, but of his admirers. I have taken another course, one more suited to my abilities, and to the taste of the times in which I live. Yet, however unequal I feel myself to that attempt, were I now to begin the world again, I would tread in the steps of that great master : to kiss the hem of his garment, to catch the slightest of his perfections, would be glory and distinction enough for an ambitious man.

I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect, not without vanity, that these Discourses bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man ; and I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce in this Academy, and from this place, might be the name of—MICHAEL ANGELO.*

* Unfortunately for mankind, these *were* the last words pronounced by this great Painter from the Academical chair. He died about fourteen months after this Discourse was delivered.—M.

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